A Lạ̄nnạ̀ in town

Kit Tiyapan

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§ **Let's start.**

I think it is high time that I talk about my life. If I were to summarise my life into only one statement, I would divide it into six periods, namely the childhood, the sword school, the New Zealand, the engineering, the England, and the Japan periods. I cannot remember anything much about my childhood period. I was born in Thailand in a town called Chiangmai. That was back in November 1966. We lived in a busy street in the town. Close by is a market. In fact there are two markets, one on the opposite side of the road to the other. My father is business man who used to own a business, a shop. He is a truly master of the house, back then even more so. He is a very responsible person who leads a virtuous life. His father had got more than one wife, to be precise three. At that time I think it was a matter of course that a man should have more than one wife. But this often led to much troubles, not unlike the way it would today if one has mistresses or is promiscuous. My father had been through it all as I think he is the eldest son of the first wife. This makes him understand all the bad points of polygamy and consequently he wisely stays away from it. He was a very bright student in his day who went to the Montfort College, which is a catholic school and the most famous one in the northern part of Thailand. He is not a Christian but a Buddhist, which is usually the case with most of the Thais and nearly all of the students at the college. I have two sisters and one brother, all elder than me; we all ended up going to, that is all come from, the same college as my father does.

My mother, on the other hand, has got a father who was only married to two wives. She is particularly proud of her lineage, that is to say, that her great-grandmother used to live in Ayuddhàyạ and her grand mother was also born there. Her grandmother must have led a very interesting life, who had been separated from her brother while still very young after their parents died. I do not know how their parents passed away, but her brother, that is the brother of my great-grandmother, is said to have been adopted by, and went away with, a performing troupe of the Chinese opera. So for the moment his trail ends there.

This grandmother of my mother, that is to say, my great-grandmother was born in 1878, nearly two centuries after the sack of Ayudhàyạ her home city by the Burmese. Before that it was a city much admired by explorers and missionaries. The hyperbolic curves of pagodas there in those days rise elegantly up from the ground, surround the sumptuous inverted bell and then turns with style into a slender spire pointing towards the sky but neither reaching nor pretending to reach it. The serene beauty of the landscape and the sincerity of the people there in those day was no exaggerated matters, and many a song has been sung by foreigners

that lament its loss.

The history of Ayudhàyạ begins when King Ŭdaung (Rạmạdhiḅàd́ị I) founded the city in 1350 and ends with the second sack of the city by the Burmese in 1767. Thai historians divide the Ayudhàyạ Kingdom into four periods. During the first period, from 14^{th} century to the beginning of 16^{th} century, it expanded eastwards and northwards. In the second period, mid 16^{th} century, there were wars with Burma. The third period of 17^{th} century saw the development of relationships with Europe while the fourth and last period, in 18^{th} century, has a prosperous beginning but ends with the city fallen to Burma for the second time. The first time it was sacked by the same was in 1569. In other words the Burmese's attack came approximately every two centuries and they almost always succeeded. The first time they came was just before the first two century cycle, when Ayudhàyạ's heroine Suriyọday lost her life duelling on elephant's back with Prạe who was the king of the attacking country.

If one supposes this trend of two hundred year cycle to carry on uninterrupted from 1350 when Ayudhàyạ was founded, through all turmoils to the present Ratànàkọsindŕa period, then Thailand is now in its prosperous period between wars, despite the economic crisis that started with the dwindling in value of the Thai currency Ḅạd in 1997. One would expect the country's prosperity, then, to reach its peak some time in the second half of the 21^{st} century. Hopefully that is, but who knows.

You never know what is going to happen to you really. My mother had menopause before she was forty, soon after she had given birth to me. Everybody says she has been lucky, even the doctors do. She is to develop osteoporosis later on, when she also breaks her hip.

Now we know more about menopause and osteoporosis. One of the most effective way to deal with them is by using hormone replacement therapy where natural oestrogen is given orally through patches attached to the skin. With the hormone, the chance of developing cancer of the womb is higher, but not that of the breast or cervix. To counter this, some doctors will also give you progesterone.

The sex hormones oestrogen and progesterone are cyclically produced by the ovary, the pattern of which is triggered by other hormones from the pituitary gland. Together these two hormones tailor the uterine lining to allow the fertilised egg to embed itself there. At menopause the ovary mysteriously loses its ability to produce them. The pituitary gland, seeing their absence, responds by making more gonadrotrophin and thus resulting the hormonal imbalance which explains the distressing symptoms in women experiencing a menopause crisis.

A newly born baby girl has within her ovaries some hundred thousand

of ova. Of these, her ripening process of ovum formation will manage to use less than five hundred from puberty all through her adult life. Exploring the use of the remaining ova in stem-cell researches is still a controversial issue yet at the turn of this century. It depends on our definition of life itself.

I can remember little of my childhood. I remember when I had to go to school for the first time I fought like mad. I was particular good at kicking with the sole of my feet. This I did, and cried, when they tried to put me into the school uniform, that is father, mother, and Lìam who lived with us and helped with the shop as well as house chores. In 1973 most city folks in Chiangmai had servants. I must have caused the three of them much trouble with my kicking and crying. I can not remember whether the uniform was torn.

In our house we have big beds which we share among us children. Three of us can easily fit into one such bed. As the youngest in the family I was quite aggressive, and I always kicked someone out of the bed, usually my brother who is the eldest. I never knew that I was kicking in my sleep because I always slept so sound. I only know that I always went to bed with a blanket on me and always woke up with the blanket on the floor. I used to wonder to myself who put it on the floor, and I used to be determined before going to sleep not to part with the blanket tonight, but it was no use, for next morning it would be gone again. Normally someone would come, I think it was my mother, either late at night or early in the morning when it was colder, picked the blanket up from the floor and put it back on me again. Then I might be able to keep it if I was lucky. Since I was born in a year of the horse, people decided that it was not unnatural that I did kick.

When we travelled together away from Chiangmai, we used to stay at hotels. We either stayed together in one room or had two rooms, one for girls and the other one for boys. I usually find myself sharing a bed with my brother, and I often wondered why he was sleeping on the floor when I woke up in the morning. I think he must have decided it was more peaceful and safer to sleep on the floor instead of getting back on to the bed when I was still there. I seem to have rebelled for my personal space even before I was ten. Later when I was in my twenties I did a similar thing on the dance floor whenever I danced. Not that I had ever kicked anyone on the dance floor, but with a wide base and a footwork I did virtually create my personal domain on the ground. And no matter how crowded the place might be, I always found before long that I had enough room to do my Zulu dancing. I always find that people eye me differently after they see my dance. I do not know whether that is a good thing or not.

Our house is in fact three houses surrounding a courtyard, with a high wall completing its remaining side to make it resemble a quad. The wall must be a yard thick and three metre high. It has a huge wooden door in the centre which opens outwards at the middle. Because the wall is so massive the door never leaves the inside of it even when fully opened. When it is shut there is a comfortable recess on the outside where the tricycle drivers take a rest or play chess, always parking their vehicles of trade such that they line the whole length of the wall. Inside the house two flights of wooden stairs leads up to the first floor where we sleep. I like sitting at its head and let myself slide down the steps. The stairs are rounded and smooth to touch. You can slide down it quite easily without hurting yourself.

The top of the stairs leads directly towards a room in which are kept mattresses. It has a large door which is normally left open. Whenever I have to turn off all the lights on the first floor before going to the ground floor I always run as fast as possible down the stairs, taking three steps at a time. It seems to me that something in the dark corner is going to chase after me if I do not bolt. I neither hesitate nor pause when darting down the stairs this way, and never look back. I feel that my heart would stop beating if I did.

Darkness is by no means the only thing that I fear. The upper floor of the of our house is made of wooden boards which have shrunk, leaving gaps between them. These gaps are only half an inch deep. Dust gathers there which bothers no one so long as the surface of the boards where one comes to touch is clean and inviting. From these narrow openings in the floor I imagine that hands of some spirit are going to come up and get hold of my ankles. So I try to place myself such that no parts of my body are directly on top of them. This preoccupation always keep me busy and silently worried.

In the middle room there is a tall stand on top of which are placed many Buddha figures and other things believed to be sacred. We pray for ten minutes each night, my mother leading. My father do not pray with us, but he also believes, or shall one say because he does so Buddha's teaching?

§

My father must have been a very bright student in his day indeed, for still studied with one of his teachers whom we call Brother Antonio, who always praised him highly. Often when he saw me he would say to me in Thai, "Don't ruin the high reputation your father have built." Brother Antonio taught me English. In Thailand we study in a class of more than fifty students, which is unimaginably large in the standard of the western countries. Everyone studies the same subjects. This holds for all

the six years of the primary school, the three years of the junior secondary school, as well as the remaining three years of the senior secondary school. Apart from English, he also taught us how to play a recorder, that piece of instrument which was the first one that I learnt. It was also him who taught us the school song in English. Although I think he is an Italian, he holds the highest authority in the English language at the primary school level. He is also quite knowledgeable in music, and he leads and runs the school brass and marching band. The school song I mentioned is ever our favourite one the words of which I think he adapted himself from the song *Heart of Oak* written by David Garrick in 1759, while the melody probably comes from Dr. William Boyce (1711–1779). This song is said to have numerous versions. Ours one is the following.

Come cheer up, my lads, 'tis to glory we steer, The pride, more than all, to the Montfort 'tis dear. Let us sing very loud. Let our college be high. For who can be 'proud as the sons of the Thai.

Montfort boys, come along! Let us sing our best song. Our flag, red, white and blue, to it we'll be true.

We fight and we conquer again and again, When borne by the red, white and blue. Our colours shall be hoisted on high, When borne by the red, white and blue.

As a comparison, the following is the original version as written by David Garrick.

Come cheer up, my lad, 'tis to glory we steer, To add something more to this wonderful year, To honour we call you, not press you like slaves, For who are so free as the sons of the waves?

Heart of oak are our ships, jolly tars are our men, We always are ready, steady, boys, steady, We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again.

We never see our foes but we wish them to stay, They never see us but they wish us away, If they run, why we follow, and run them ashore And if they won't fight us, we cannot do more.

They swear they'll invade us, these terrible foes, They frighten our women, our children and beaus, But should their flat bottoms in darkness get o'er, Still Britons they'll find to receive them on shore.

Our worthy forefathers, let's give them a cheer, To climates unknown, did courageous steer. Through oceans to deserts, for freedom they came, And dying, bequeathed us their freedom and fame.

As the British navy was during the time that this song was written was the main support of the mighty British Empire this song must have had its day and a wonderful history, or shall we say a mixed one because no empires can come about without a war, and wars should not really be said to be wonderful. However, the spirit of the song lives, and there is something artistic and wonderful within it which is carried over to the

movie *Star Trek*, where it appears in the following form.

Come cheer up my lads, 'tis to glory we steer, To find something new in this wonderful year. 'Tis by honour we're bound, we're not pressed here like slaves, And who are so free as the sons of the waves? Heart of oak are our ships. Heart of oak are our men. We always are ready – steady boy steady! We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again!

So much for the fighting spirit! In fact I think most people like the song because the melody is never high and the line is convenient for bellowing together. So Brother Antonio taught us this song as well as other things.

No Europeans can live in Thailand without the air conditioning and Brother Antonio is no exception. When I was young air conditioners were so rare that except for his office I can hardly remember having seen one anywhere. Even to this day most people of around my age or older still find it hard to feel at ease living in an air-conditioned room. It is a different in offices where the working environment is invariably western and you move about all the time, but at home where you relax and do nothing conditioned air sometimes become a bit cold and too dry even to myself.

I remember at the annual festival of my school during my fifth year in the primary school, which was held during winter, in fact I think it was Christmas, I played a part on the stage in a little drama. The scene was nothing more than a conversational passage in English to show the ability of students on the subject. As I do not remember having any surprise about being picked to play the part, I guess that my English must have been already above the average then. I played a part of Peter who is reluctantly woken up by his wife, who was in actual fact a friend of mine whose name is *Drabẏsin* who is a boy dressed up in a woman costume as my school is a boy high school or simply boy high as they call it in New Zealand. He was very beautiful and cross dressing became him very well at that time. Either just before or just after that school drama it must have been that our group generally led by him had become somewhat effeminate as I would have called it, which had lasted for about a year. Most of us, with perhaps only one exception, had grown out of it not long afterwards. Drabẏsin had grown out of his beautiful self through a period with dimples into a handsome and transformed one, though a bit macho as of the last time that I saw him. In that drama he wakes me up saying it is late and that I shall be late. I try first to insist that it is still dark and finally, when I really have to get up, come shivering out of bed asking, "Is it cold outside?" Now I am sure his name in the play was Mary, but what is uncertain to me now is what he did to wake me up. I think it must have been by a bucket of water as the story goes. Not with real water of course, only imaginary, since it was in the

middle of the winter and Chiangmai in winter can be very cool or quite cold even nowadays, more so back then, that I could have caught a cold or pneumonia if I was really poured with water. The conversation was not live but recorded in the Brother Antonio's studio, that is his office. The sound effect of the water being poured was produced somehow or another, and as it was cold in his office I was already sufficiently shaking involuntarily from the air conditioning for the scene of shivering to have required only one take.

In my sixth year of the primary school I joined the school marching band where I played a second if not third trumpet. My sense of coordination must have been rather poor because I remember blasting wrong notes shamelessly all through most of the occasions that we were invited to march. A few of such occasions were in funeral processions, another one I remember was I think at some sport event where the son of King Rama IX was present, and yet another one where the king himself came. But through all these concerts by the brass band of our renowned school I only remember waiting long hours to play only a few pieces where we played sitting down, or blasting away wrong notes in the heat when we were marching. Someone told me that people would never hear the wrong notes, but I doubt if that could be the case. The trouble with marching is that I could never memorise all the notes, and despite the fact that the part of the trumpet in a marching song can generally be squeezed into a single page of about six inches wide and five inches high there never seemed to be enough of such parts for the trumpet to go around that I always found myself without one. Anyhow, even when I could get my hands on a page or two of these songs I never seemed to know which song we were about to play next. Moreover, I always had a bad habit of leaving my part to play with that of the person closest to me. When we sat down and play it was somewhat better because then I only played half of the music wrong as we always sat in groups of the same instrument so there would always be someone around who knew the order of the songs and, more important, who could always produce the essential music out of hat. One such person I remember is Tàem who was one year my senior at the school. Drabẏsin also played in the band that year, but he played the second trumpet the same as I did while Tàem played the first trumpet. Another person is É who was in the same year as myself but who played the first trumpet and together with Tàem shared a fame particularly for stamina.

When I started to learn how to play the trumpet I had to learn how to tense both side of my lips to seal the gaps thereof, and to shape my lips in such a way that it can be squeezed and sealed on the mouth piece of the trumpet. The tip of the tongue acts like a cork of a bottle

or a stop valve where the pent-up air held in your breath is suddenly released to produce a sound. First you would play with only the mouth piece until you get a feel of it, and then you try it on the real trumpet. Thereafter it is only a matter of improving your technique and building your repertoire, and then, *presto!*, a musician. The trouble is that the playing of the trumpet as I have just described not only sounds like spitting, but actually one is spitting one's saliva all the time into the instruments which are never properly cleaned after use. Moreover as one among the smallest member of the band who was often late for a practice, which was nothing unusual considering that I had quite a few interests at the time, I always found my instrument missing and had to take another, often an older and less becoming one. The instruments of course belonged to the school and must be shared. But each of us was supposed to stick to only one instrument and to use it through out the whole semester. In practice this was seldom the case. I have an inherited what is called the Glucose-6 Phosphate Dehydrogenase Deficiency syndrome, which makes me more susceptible to chronic bacterial infections, so at that time I often had a trouble with my throat and was often given antibiotics. One antibiotic called Tetracycline, which was given to me at the early ages, has given me a lasting effect which results in the dark brown stain in my teeth and the weakening of my bones. I cannot remember what he looked like but have learnt that it was Dr.Pradhạn who had always prescribed me large doses of this antibiotics at the time when every doctor should have known this adverse effect on children of the medicine.

When I have finished my last year of the primary school we had to move to another campus half a kilometre from the one I had spent my earlier six years. I decided to quit playing the trumpet in the band for several reasons, one of which is that I did not want to walk five hundred metres everyday to the rehearsal. Another reason was that I blamed the chronic throat problem I had to the mouthpieces and the trumpets which I thought were filthy. Anyway I think there are other reasons. One of them is that I get bore with things quite easily. Also I had many other more interesting things to do. Traffic scout was one of them, then came the forest fire fighting training, and then the Ancient Thai Weaponry Club. Also it was during the three years of the junior high school that I began to have an interest in astronomy and built my own telescopes.

§

Every year there is a sport day when we do not have to study. The whole school is divided into four houses, each of a different colour. There are blue, green, red and yellow. The four houses compete against one another in athletics and team sports. We make T-shirts and sell to all members of our colour. These are worn on the sport day. Those who do

not play, cheer.

Today is a sport day, and Siddhi and I stroll up to the first floor of the clubs' building. The rooms here are old classrooms. Each room has a blackboard covering the whole of one of its wall. The floors are made of teak planks. Teaks are trees which give high quality timbers. The wood is soft with delicate texture which is easy to work. They are the only trees which termites never touch. They used to grow in plenty in the forests around Jiangmhăi, but now they have dwindled into a very sorry state.

Each of the rooms has two doors on one side, one at the front and the other at the rear. On the other side line the windows from one end to another. The windows on the first floor open on to the roof of the bicycle shed.

In one of these rooms we find one boy with a rattan cane in each hand, practising steps. He is smaller than us, and slender but strong. He keeps his body parallel to the line drawn from one of his foot to another. His feet are more than two shoulders apart. The steps he makes are in long strides, always making an angle of 45 degrees with the direction he is moving. Thus he is moving in a zigzag fashion, with his body 45 degrees with the direction he is heading.

The right hand lift up above his head, the cane goes around his neck in half-circle and then comes obliquely down at the same time as his right foot leads in a full stride. Next his left hand and foot do a similar thing, and so on until he nearly reaches the far wall where the windows are. Then he steps back towards us, the rattan sticks in his hands now alternately in a position to receive a blow from an imaginary enemy's sword. His back-stepping is also in a zigzag manner. When his right foot leads the retreat, the cane in his left hand would be in front to protect against a blow. In other words, he always faces the direction where the blow is coming; the cane in front firm and protective, the other hand, also holding a cane, close to the hip.

We watch him go forwards and backwards in this way five times or more before he notices us. When he steps, his knees are bent in a slightly squatting position. When he sees us, he straightens up to his full height; and he looks somewhat taller than his real height. ''Morning,' he greets us smiling while walking towards the door where we are. ''Morning,' I venture, 'Where did you learn that?' 'From the sword club,' he answers, briefly spins both canes in his hands, each in the opposite direction with the other, so naturally that they look a part of his and not threatening in any way considering he is doing this while talking with us. 'How can we apply if we wish to learn too?', I ask. 'If you want to learn,' then he smiles a most sincere smile and says, 'I will introduce you to Master.'

At our school we call all teachers with a prefix *master* to their names. But at our sword club if we say, 'Master,' it can only mean one person, Master Siddhibaur our sword teacher. The name of our club is *Ancient Thai Art of Fighting*, but it is a direct descendant of a sword school of Siam, presumably from the time when its capital was Ȧyudhyạ. Among his peer, our master is known as 'Pīak'. He is a student of the late teacher Ạrị who came from the same school as, and is senior to, Smạn, another sword teacher. The latter founded a sword school in Bangkok that teaches the arts for a fee, which is now internationally renowned, while Ạrị, remaining a steadfast believe in teaching his students for free, moved north and founded another school in Jiangmhaị. He named his school 'Śrị Ȧyudhyạ,' while Smạn named his 'Buddhaiysvarṅġ'.

Tọ introduces us to Master. During the first month we do nothing except walking up and down the depth of the club room. The feet must be very wide apart, back upright and the steps very long ones, always at 45 degrees with the forward direction, first to one side and then to the other.

The floor of the room is made of wooden planks which has shrunken so that there are wide gaps between them. But it is smooth and polished, from being rubbed under feet all this time I suppose. Here and there a nail sticks its head up because the hole it has been driven into becomes larger as the wood shrinks. It sometimes catches us in the foot. When this happens we know only one remedy, that is the tincture of iodine. Right from the beginning, I have a new wound almost every week.

We perform at festivals and ceremonies, live on Channel 8 from its broadcasting theatre in Laṃpạng, at night in front of a monument of a Lā̱nnạ heroine in Laṃbụn and at the annual Winter Festival in Jiangmhăi. We also go to church on Christmas. Sitting one night amidst knives and swords I learn the song 'We wish you a merry Christmas'. Master is a Christian and our school Montfort College is Catholic. Our Brother André has fierce dogs. But stand at the front gate to his house and sing the song together, to the sound of their chorus.

Then I happen to take the written exam for the American Field Service student exchange programme and pass. At the oral exam where one has to perform I do my sword dance (what else?), and after that become the only one from North Thailand chosen, or else the only one who chooses, to live a year in New Zealand, which is actually ten months.

§

My father has a book by Camilo Osias, a compilation of literary materials for the intermediate Filipino students, the 7$^{\text{th}}$ book of *The Philippine Readers*. The first thing in it is a poem written by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850 – 1919) called *Solitude*. My father likes this poem very much and

it becomes my favourite. I include it here because it has helped shape my thoughts from this stage on until much later.

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air.
The echoes bound to joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go.
They want full measure of all your pleasure
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all.
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by.
Succeed and give, it helps you live,
But no man can help you die.
There is a room in the halls of pleasure
For a large and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisle of pain.

Ella Wilcox is an American poet from Wisconsin. She was born in Johnstown Center. With this and the sword club is concluded my life up to this point.

§ **New Zealand's year**

Philip and Rob are both in the same sixth form class as mine. Both of them are also in the Mathematics and the Drawing classes. Philip has learnt some Maori. He is very helpful and always explain to me things that I don't know. He asks me what my name Kittisak means in Thai. I tell him that it means good rumours or honour, and ask him in turn what would it be in Maori, of which he say s honour in Maori is *Honore*. I don't think the name sounds nice, so I never use it. I don't know whether he realises that my name *Nui* is also a Maori word, where it means *big*.

The spelling of Kittisak in Thai is *Kittiśakd̀xi* and Nui *Nhŭy*. The former is a Sanskrit word. Perhaps you already know this because it

contains the letter *ś*. The latter is indigenously a Thai word, and this is not so difficult to see because, for one thing, it is monosyllabic, and for another it uses the tonal accent *ẹk* it uses. *Tịyȧ* is the Chinese family name *Zhāng*, and is the Daiy rendering of how Lạ̄nna̤ writes *Tia̤*. In other words it is how Lạ̄nna̤ writes the word *Zhāng*. Finally, *Bandha* is the Pali *bandha* which means *binding*. It needs the knowledge of all the five languages to explain my name.

§

I have joined the Tramping Society of Ashburton. It is one of the best things that I have ever done while in New Zealand. We have our meeting regularly at the Ashburton College. As I only live less than ten minutes from my school, no one needs to pick me up after the meeting no matter how late in the night it is. Once one member showed slides of his trip trekking the Himalayas.

I go along with the others to various places. We go up Mount Hutt in a car to as far as Arthur's Pass where we stopped and to spend a night, only to find out the next morning that we are trapped in the snow. The road to and from Arthur's Pass has been completely blocked by snow, so I have an excuse of missing school on Monday.

Soon after we have woken up, we all move into the sitting room where we spend the morning watching the snow through the windows which are large and run from the floor up to the ceiling which must be about five metre high. Several Keas jump around outside. They come up to the windows and look at me without fear, even when I tap at the glass.

No beating about the bush, all Kiwis know what we like best are the bush and the beach. People go to the sea to swim and surf, even in South Island where the water is rather freezing. The best time is probably the holiday period between end-December and January. This is despite the fact that the currents can be strong and on occasions you may meet sharks. Drownings are by no means uncommon and surf life-saving is one among the major summer sports. With regard to the bush, there is no questions about that being our home. Take as an example, suppose you are visiting a relative and it is getting late and time to go home, the bush would be the only excuse you may use to leave for which you would head. Together these two, that is to say, the beach and the bush breed sand flies whenever they come into close proximity of each other.

At present we are in the bush all right. But it is still our *bush* if only because we are snug and warm in here, and happy. Things happening in the bush are, for example, walks, long tramps, mountaineering, deer shooting and skiing. Among these the first one is easy to do enough. The last one is hugely a great fun if you know how to do it, which I do not.

§

There is going to be an AFS event by our chapter at Christchurch and somehow Òn and I have managed to get in touch with each other and decided that we will give a Thai performance together there. I also plan to perform the fire staffs again, and so have been busy making my equipments. Each staff is about 160 cm long. I wind strips of cloths three inches wide around the poles 20 cm from both of their ends. Then I drive small nails in to fix the cloths and wind some wires around them to secure them in their place. The fuel is one part petrol and one part kerosene. With this I soak the clothed ends of the sticks. Basically the staffs are torches to be lit at both ends at the same time and then spin around and around.

The cultural night is held at a Marae in Christchurch. A Marae is a traditional hall for gatherings. This Marae is a part of a girl's high school. First the students entertain us with their performances. These they do very well, which start the evening off nicely. After they have finished it is our turn as guests to perform something in return.

After the performances by Maori girls, the highlights of the evening seem to be the Thai boxing which I perform with Òn and the fire sticks which I perform alone. I did a Thai sabre dance first. Then comes the Muay Thai. We do a slow dance first. Òn seems to have picked up his movements for this purpose from professional Thai boxers, while I closely follow the practice of the Old Ayudhyạ in my school. After the ritualistic first part, the next part is exciting because we do a few minutes of mock fight. Here we include difficult moves which we remember from an advertisement on the television of one energising drink back home. When I kick Òn in his neck I make sure that my foot merely touches it and stops there. But as my foot goes up, I slap the palm of my hand against the side of my upper leg as they pass each other. That gives the kick a sound which raises a hushed cry from the audience and holds them with excitement thereafter. Of course I win as usual. I always win in mock fights. Before that, Òn kicks me around first. I retreat while warding off his blows. Then come the three old movements in sequence. I am the one who do them because I am from a sword school and so could pick them up more naturally. Being exhausted, I fight back bravely but weakly. I kick a high but faint kick under which Òn duck before coming up again. When he has done so, I have my back to him, but the momentum of my kick which has missed is still with me. So I spin around with this, and up comes my other leg in no time to greet poor Òn's neck. It is more difficult to control the force of this move in performances. I did not realised this, and I believe I have slightly hit his chin, because he complains to me afterwards. That mock kick sends him back, and I follow. But he gathers himself up and kicks back

professionally. But his kicks are less strong now, and they reach only my upper arms. So I could gather one of them in my arm, and in no time the elbow tip of my other arm flies towards his knee to dislocate it, then it goes up to cover my head against possible blows, and carries on further until it reaches his face. The last move comes not long after this, and is one of the most powerful and definitive move, even though it sounds fictitious to the ears. With the sole of one of my feet I receive Òn's kick in the upper part of his leg where it is closer to the fulcrum and therefore the momentum is less than if I were to receive the same kick at other points on his leg further away from him. I let the momentum of the blow send me off, only control the direction of it such that I rise up briefly above his head. In other words, I push myself up using my other leg and ride his kick up, like a surfer riding a wave, instead of being thus sent backwards and away. I reach the height of my ride, twist my body while coming down so that one of my legs meets Òn at his neck. The gravity and the momentum, both of which originated from him, help each other to send him sprawling and sleeping senseless on the ground. Then I kneel down beside his body to pay homage to the dead, and he rises up and we bowed to the audience before walking off the stage amidst a thundering applause.

The highlight of the evening is still yet to come, and that proves to be my spinning torches. I begin by spinning one torch lit at both ends. This I spin firstly in front, then back and front alternately, and then behind my back with the centre of the spin gyrating up and down. Then comes another move which starts from behind, gyrates up, then thrown forwards and spins there, and then thrown backwards and gyrates up again and so on. In the following move the bottom end of the pole is being thrown to the front and then to the back alternately, so the spinning torch covers your head like an umbrella of fire. Then the umbrella becomes a more stylistic hat with a bigger circle behind the head and a smaller one in front of it. Then the torch sometimes spins down below both of my legs which jump and down one after the other whenever it does. The moves of two poles, one in each hand, are the same as those in of one pole except that only some of the latter are possible in the former. You can only spin with both hands those moves which do not require each of the poles to move from one hand to another, since this would otherwise amount to torch throwing not torch spinning. I am no torch thrower, only a torch spinner or revolver. This torch gyrating business takes no more than ten minutes to perform, but always raise much excitement and interests. After I have finished, I find to my surprise that somebody has put a bucket filled with water at one side of the stage. But the thing is less dangerous than it looks. In my numerous performances there has never

once been a problem with regard to fire, apart from that sometimes the t-shirt I was wearing was scorched.

After we have left the Marae, we have a party. The atmosphere at the party is filled with sincereness and friendship. One man comes and introduce himself to me as Charlie while I am sitting and talking among my friends. He is very good mannered and sincere. He is a guest from another chapter, the Southerland Chapter. It surprises me and fills me with such pride that someone should wish to know me, a mere school boy.

Weeks after am back in Ashburton, Charlie calls us from his home in Invercargill to ask whether I would like to join the walk at Milford Sound that he is organising for his AFS chapter. He says he has also asked Òn and Nōi, who said they are also coming. My Dad and Mum are quite proud at how I get to know good people through my performing ancient things.

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The Milford Track proves to be simply amazing. It is a jungle where there is no snakes, let alone poisonous ones, and a forest that comes with no diseases. The track takes us a few days to walk. We travel by boat from Te Anau Downs to Glade House, walk up to the McKinnon Pass (3,681 feet) and then down again the other side to the Sound, passing the Sutherland Falls along the way. We walk from 2 to 5 December 1983.

We reach the mountain top where it is windy and the clouds are close by. I sit down to rest against the rucksack which I still have on my back and stretch out my legs. There are many Keas flying around. One gets down to the ground, hops towards me and pecks a few times at my boots. I try to sit still while watching it all the while. It does not fear me. The peak where we are is so close to the sky and its home, that I have become a part of its surrounding.

My year in New Zealand, though as I said earlier only ten months, proves later to play an important part in shaping the way I think. At Ashburton College I had seen a computer for the first time, not to mention used it to boot, though it is true they were Apple computer. What are MacIntosh computers anyway if not a newer Apple? My English teacher Mr. Lonsdale has been a fabulous and a wise teacher. His poetry-reading creates a world of its own. I am totally led away whenever he reads to us poems. I never knew her name was Vicki. To us she is always the beautiful Miss Thorpe, our Music teacher. She teaches us how both Hindemith and Schoenberg have played a key part in shaping the twentieth century music, that they are quite different from each other, and how. As for my Art History class, there is no questions whatever about it being important. Before this I had not really looked at a painting, or

should I say that I had always looked at them but never actually saw?

§

During my first year at the Chulalongkorn University I play rugby in the B team of the Engineering Department. We practise quite hard. But when it comes to matches, each one lasts only ten minutes. I play without my glasses, and I wear no contact lenses, so I never see who is whom when I play. Our B team met the A team of Architecture one day, and I passed the ball to an opponent because he called out for it. In the end they did not win the match, which was extraordinary because they were the best while we must have been one of the worst. Obviously they were even more shocked and surprised by the incident. Not only did I pass the ball to an opponent, but I also passed it forward; which rid me of any excuse I might have, because you never pass the ball forward in rugby, not even to one of your own teammates. My left leg gets injured and it become a weak spot for the next three years. Some times my leg simply gives way. I decide that rugby is not for me, at least not as a player.

My first year results are among the worst possible. At Chula, if you get less than 2.0 out of 4.0, but no lower than 1.5, you get an upper probation; and if lower than 1.5 a lower probation. My result for the first semester this year is that of the lower probation. Because of this I have to stop most of my activities, but I still sing at the Vaḍhàṇạ Church. We sing Handel's Messiah at Easter. I also sing at the Màhạthăi Church at Christmas. When to my dismay my result does not get better, I have to stop my singing too.

Still my study does not improve. I do not know how to study an Engineering subjects. Engineering is the know-how, as opposed to the know-why of science. This means that so long as you know how to solve a problem, you do not care what the theory or the reason behind it is. You will never pass an exam by reading the theory. You have to play around with the problems. Once I realise this, I stay away from the theories and set myself working on the problems. This is much more fun, and you never fall asleep reading. I sit in front of a television, with a video on, while trying to solve the problems. I can not solve the textbook problems listening to music. For some unexplained reason, music distracts my attention while visual images do not.

With an upper probation you get one point, and with the lower probation two points. Points accumulate unless there is an interruption when you could get yourself out of the probation. When you have five points or more you are retired. I think the same is true if you whenever your result is less than 1.2. The first semester is an exception where no points are given, otherwise I would have already been given two points then. I

manage to get out of the probation in the second semester, but thereafter receive one point every semester for four semesters.

At the end of the second semester we choose our major. There are fourteen majors to choose from, and each student ranks all of them in order of preference. Following the currently popular opinion I choose Electrical Engineering as number one and Mining Engineering number six. Because my study result is very poor, I become one of the eleven students who are assigned to the Mining Engineering Department. Among these, no one chooses Mining as his first choice. From this number only two graduate from this department; Bongśàdhaur as a mining engineer, myself as a mineral engineer. The others change to some other departments.

I want to change to Electrical Engineering but can not, so I take Electrical Engineering subjects without telling my advisor. I write all the registration forms myself and sign them with his signature. I am desperate because I always follow others and never make my own ideas and dreams different from theirs.

At the end of the third year every student have to gain a practical experience by working in a company. I want to find traineeships in the United Kingdom, for one thing because I want to be trained as an electrical engineer. If I practise close at home, or so I think, I would have to work in a mining company, which I do not want to. In my second year I go to the British Council and obtain addresses of some companies in U. K. This I show to Ben, who then picks up about five from among the twenty odd. We decide that I will write letters to them, but will show these to Ben first so that he can make some suggestions and corrections. Later on in our talk, however, he says that it would be quite unlikely that I will be able to get a place by applying this way. He writes down the name and address of Bill and says that I could write to him. He makes corrections after I have written the letter, and I send it to Bill. I also write to Peter about renting a room in his house. Bill is Ben's brother-in-law, and Ben used to train Peter when he started his work at the same firm where he worked. Bill gives me a salary of one hundred pounds a week, half of which will go to Peter for the rent. In England, everyone seems to think that fifty pounds a week is rather expensive for a room. In Thailand the usual price that I pay is about ten pounds a month. We will see how the room is.

I know later that while I was writing my letter to Bill, Ben made a phone call to introduce myself to him so that he already knew me before receiving my letter. Such is the kindness of Ben.

I do not want to tell my parents that I am going to England for my engineering training because otherwise my father would surely insist on giving me some money. Little do I know how tight the situation they

are currently in, for my father never lets us know or complains. I sell my bicycle to Baị for 500 Bahts. That is only two per cent of the plane ticket to Heathrow. The rest of the money comes from my savings. But in fact the bicycle is what my father gave me, and I should not be selling it without letting him know first. Also, I sell it too cheaply, even though it is to a close friend. He never looks after it afterwards, and it is going to nearly break my heart when I see it again when I come back; flat-tyred, rusty, left around unchained and unlocked in a state of disuse. Lastly, the money in my saving account originally came from my father anyway.

I tell Nhăung over the phone that I have to get a hands-on experience this summer for my course at the university, that it may be out of town and I do not know whether it will be easy for me to get in touch over the next few months but there is no need to worry. Then I buy my ticket to go to London. The night before I fly I stay at Ben's place. He lets me read *When the wind blows*, a story by Raymond Briggs about the aftermath of a nuclear war. It is a profound cartoon that leaves you thinking for a long time afterwards, and you will never forget you have read it. This is the summer of 1989. Who would know that within six months the Iron Curtain will come down. No one would have an imagination to imagine such thing.

Ben teaches me the necessary manners; how you must wipe the tub or sink clean after you have finished with it. 'Shall I find myself an umbrella to take along with me?', I once asked him, to which he replied after some thought, 'No. That's not necessary.' Later I learn that this is the case. Unless you have to be out and about all the time, or unless you always wait until the last minute to go to work, for instance, you hardly need an umbrella in England. Heavy rain in England is very rare, rain is unusual, but most of the time when the sun is not there it drizzles. And even when it drizzles, it usually does so on and off according to the patterns of the cloud above and the wind from the north west. This, I think, is the reason why people wore hats. It is funny to find oneself under an umbrella when it only drizzles on and off. A hat is more convenient, and a jacket absorbs water like a blotter absorbs ink. Moreover, when you are working from nine to five where does an umbrella get in?

'Have you any other suggestion?', I once asked Ben. He thought for a while and then said,'Yes. Don't talk too much at work!'

The following day Ben drives me to the airport. It takes us only one hour because it is not a weekday and we go by the express way. Since I have known Ben I no longer speak in a Kiwi accent. Several years from now Charlie is to say that my accent then is neutral when I express my regret of having lost the accent.

I fly Air Lanka because they gave me the best price. I drink beer and

wine on the plane. The trip is about fifteen hours, so I get some sleep. I feel free again when I fly away from home; the same feeling that I used to feel six years ago when I flew to Christchurch. When you fly, you have so much time to relax and reflect. I would not like to fly with anyone. I wish not to have a long conversation for I prefer at such time the solitude.

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I meet Bill for the first time at Heathrow Airport. We drive along M25 to his place where I am to stay this weekends. The he drives me to Peter's place in Weybridge where I am going to stay for the rest of my job training.

There is another person whose name is Daniel who rents a room at Peter's place. He is a chemical engineer. He is a large, gentle man who wears glasses, which reminds me of the leading character in War and Peace.

When I am alone in my room for the first time, I lie down on the carpet and look up at the ceiling in that position for a long time. I think about many things. I think about the problems I always have in my study, about many expectations and as many disappointments that have been. I think about our sword school, about New Zealand, and about Ace.

Peter has a classical guitar and he let me use it whenever I want. He has music books, and from these I teach myself classical guitar. Often I sit alone in the drawing room at night and play to myself *My bonnie lies over the ocean.*

From the books on cooking that Peter always keeps on the mantelpiece I learn how to make the dough for pizza and the pizzas. My pizzas start off simple and yet become ever more simplified as time goes by. I mix flour with water and a little salt, and knead the mixture into a dough. In the end for the topping I merely use carrots, oil, and tomato sauce.

When he was a boy, Bill loved to play with model trains. His is not an exception of English kids. The railway was born and developed here. Recently the privatisation of the railway has somewhat damaged the fame and integrity of this service sector. There had been horrible crashes that showed irresponsibility.

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Penmaenmawr is Welsh for *big stone head.* It is the name of a small town in North Wales which lies between Conwy and Bangor. It is by the seaside and on the border of the Snowdonia national park. This weekends I come here according to the plan I have made since last week. I stay at the Penmaenmawr Youth Hostel which sits on a very strange location, that is on the beach. It is the sole house there on a piece of land that stretches between A55 and the sea. Ten years from now it

will have already closed down, which is the more pity for it is in such an impressive location. However, there are not many people staying and the place is quite empty, so I guess that's why it is not profitable. I wonder to myself why so few people come here. There are not many people who like coming to a small town like this. But I like this no less than I do Edinburgh. I also want to go to Inverness, but it is a bit too far away from Surrey where I live. Snowdonia will be opened in a few weeks. It has been closed to the tourists since winter. You can see mountains in the distance. I only walk up to the top of the hill nearby where there is a stone wall, and look at the sea below.

§

Bill has arranged for me to get a job training for one week at a factory in Slough. He did so because I told him that I studied Control Systems. I do not dare tell him that as far as my university is concerned I am a student in Mineral Engineering; I study Control Systems without my supervisor's consent. It is very kind of him because this company in Slough does the Programmable Logic Controllers and I have never seen one before. Also, I still get my salary for the week that I spend at the factory.

Met helps find a place for me to stay there. It is a house of an Indian family.

Slough turns out to be a sombre, industrial town where the streets do not feel safe to walk along. You pop out, walk along quickly to go somewhere, and once there pop in again and feel relieved. When I see someone on the street, I often judge and keep the distance such that to make sure I can run away quicker than he can approach me. Except close to schools, that is, where there are then many people around and it is all right.

Not far away from Slough is the home of the richest woman on Earth, Queen Elizabeth II, Windsor Castle. If she is not here, you would probably find her at the Buckingham Palace or at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh.

Being trained with a manufacturer is something different. Here I am looked after by a young man who is only a few years older than me. Neither him or me seems to have that many things to do. He tries to find one thing or another for me to do, but it is never a real job. I learn how to draw a ladder diagram and how to programme the PLC, and I come to realise the vast gap between the theory and the practice of Control Systems. On one hand the theory is purely mathematical and gets more and more abstract, while on the other the practice has always been and mainly are rules of thumbs, always the simplest technology that works.

My room is upstairs on the first floor with its casement window immediately above the front door. The house is a town house with neither garden in front nor behind. It is painted white. Entering the house there is a corridor straight ahead that leads to the kitchen. Behind the front door and to the right is a staircase which goes up to my room, and immediately next to it is a bathroom. The family is lovable, quiet and considerate, which makes them seem out of place because the town looks rough and unrefined. There are husband, wife, two girls and one baby boy. The wife sees me cooking everyday, and one day she lets me try some Indian food which is very nice. The house is small but tidy. The bathroom is clean, though there are sometimes knickers lying around, and I keep it that way whenever I use it.

I came here on Friday in the evening and began my training at the company on Monday. On Tuesday Daniel calls during the day. Over the phone he says that he is going to sail to Cherbourg with his father and one of his friends in his father's boat. He asks me whether I would like to join them. 'Of course, I would love to,' I says. So he arranges that they will pick me up on Friday afternoon after I finish my work.

We sail the whole night and it is very stormy even Daniel's Dad becomes sea-sick. I take a few turns holding the steering wheel, feeling less knock-about when I do, before laying my head down in the bow and sleep until day comes. The sea is so rough and the wave so high that half of the time we can not see the horizon. Our small sailing boat keeps tilting haphazardly this way and that. When I wake up in the morning we are already docked at the bay in Cherbourg. It is a sunny day with gentle breezes but no more. The sea seems so calm I must have dreamt it all up the night before.

But even if all that had been a dream, I still think I have learnt from it how to behave in a rough sea when you are at the helm. You head in the shortest straight line possible for the next crest, one after another. Never ever shy from them and let them come to your side because that is the easiest way they can capsize you. Place your feet very wide apart when you stand, for it is a stabler position. With that and your hands on the steering wheel you could even sense the throw and the need of your ship through the touch. The best cure for nausea at sea is to put your head down so that it becomes one with the body of the mass. This is the same reason you never feel nauseated when you swim.

Towards the end of my stay in England I buy myself a golf set because, after all, I am going to become a businessman and have contacts all over the place.

Then I buy myself an Interrail ticket, don a nomad instinct and set off for ten days in Europe. I cross on the ferry to Amsterdam, and from there

on to Belgium and Luxembourg. In 1948 these three countries formed a group called the Benelux countries. In French, Hollande is a more populated part of Pays-Bas or the *low country*, the capital city of which is Amsterdam. The other name of Pays-Bas in French is Nederland and in English Netherlands. People in the Netherlands speak Dutch. In Belgium they speak Dutch, French and German. Thus Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot has a French touch to the way he says things. In Luxembourg, however, most people only speak French.

From here the train passes Frankfurt am Main, Stuttgart, Hamburg and then into Denmark. We come to an end terminal there at about midnight. It is cold on the street. The street lights shine through the fog giving the streets a blurred appearance. Not a soul in sight I walk along. Luckily I find a lighted building which turns out to be a police station. The policeman lets me sleep on the bench there, and though in the morning there is some shaking of the head I am allowed to use the toilet. Feeling refreshed after a good sleep I board another train and cross over into Sweden. After another dawn has arrived, I meet a man on the train who invites me to visit his hometown where his mother lives. It is a small beautiful town overlooking a lake by the side of which his mother lives. She is a kind, elderly lady, and for all I know does good job at baking cakes. But her son is quite keen to show me around, so we set off again soon. He shows me his farm houses, visit a friend of his who is tinkering with his sport car, and then we visit an opening ceremony of a small shop where a man plays a few quick tunes on his fiddle.

At a roadside restaurant we have some pizza and drink some beer. Then I board my train again. This time I should get off and change to another train in order to cross over to Norway. But I have fallen asleep from the beer and the warmth inside the carriage. When I finally wake up I decide to go all the way to the end terminal. Once there I board another train to cross over to Norway via the *Ofotel* line. It is a beautiful route and I am held in awe all the way through it. There is no connecting train to the south along the Norwegian coast, therefore I hitch-hike.

It is midnight when I stand on the road side, but the sun is still above the horizon. Some people are fitting the roof in the distance. The first lift I get is a small truck with ample room in the front seats where I sit with the driver and his young son. 'No, I am not from China', I answer his question, then noticing that he seems disappointed I add, 'I am partly Chinese but have neither been to China nor the Tiananmen Square'. The Chinese authority has recently killed some students there.

Then I tell him where I am from and he says I must be poor. I say, 'Yes. And I am a student'. You are supposed to be poor anywhere when you are a student. That is why students in Europe and China alike will

stand in front of a tank. When you are poor, educated and not starving, you tend to have your ideals.

My second lift is an elderly woman whom I gather to be 85. She vigorously explains to me that the five main fiords of the coast in this country were the five fingers of a god. The road is ever winding, with always bridges ahead and cliffs on your right. But she let go of the steering wheel, holds up her hand outstretched and with her other hand points out and names one by one the five fiords. I hold my breath and look ahead, expecting to find ourselves landing in odd places anytime. But her timing is amazingly precise and natural that she never even once miss a single turn, or else no one will ever hear about this in any case. To be on the safe side, however, I try to change the subject.

She would like to hear the national anthem of Thailand, so I sing for her. David, a professional tenor from England, once taught me how people of his trade project their voice across the *mask*, that is to say, their cheek-bone. My voice is therefore quite full, it fills up the interior of her car. When I am through with my singing I ask her to sing the national song of Norway, which she does with a fine voice while I hum along half a beat behind her. We must have seemed to a stranger like two bosom friends indeed. She says she can remember King Bhumibol when he visited Norway some thirty years ago. She thought at that time, she says, that he was more attractive than her fellow countrymen.

The road we travel on comes to an end at a ferry terminal. Here we say goodbye to each other, when she insists on giving me some coins which I shall never have used. I have to wait for a the ferry to cross over to the road on the opposite side. The raised cabin which overlooks the sea is made from pine wood. Into this I enter, walk across the room to the far end and there lie down on the clean floor to get some rest. The whole room smells of fresh wood. The sun light enters through the front porch, door and windows at a slant angle and shed an orange light on the floor beautifully. The kind lady has already secured for me my next lift, which is to be with a couple who are also waiting to go across on the ferry with their station-wagon. They sit down beside me in the cabin, also absorbing the atmosphere.

From here back to France nothing much happens. I enter France at night in a TGV the sleeping cabin of which seems like what you expect in a scientific fiction or modern space craft. There are no seats. Passengers sleep three to each side, stacked up one on top of the other in an s-curve position and facing left and alternately right. Under your knees the *bed* curves up to support your legs and makes them remain at an angle. It is like a hole dug into the plastic wall to make a hole such that it fits all the curves of your body, and arranged with respect to the remaining

holes in such a way that it efficiently uses up all the space. There are no straight lines to be seen inside the cabin.

At Cherbourg I am told to go back to Paris for I have entered France without a visa. I do not argue but walk around the building, get into the passengers' waiting room through the side door and soon find myself on board the hovercraft, thinking to myself that I prefer the ferries for the noise that it makes.

§

When the summer of 1990 comes I become a trainee of AIESEC, Association Internationale des Étudiantes en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales, in Budapest. Ben seemed not to like the idea of my going to an Eastern Block country, but that was before the change-over. Hungary turned a democratic country half a year before I go there, and has done so due in great part to the efforts from people involved in the field of Economics.

Three AIESECers of the Budapest University of Economics greet on my arrival at the airport there. I have only finished the last one of my exams not a week ago and feel rather strange now that I am at the airport of the capital city of Hungary, the country which six months ago was still behind the Iron Curtain. This is the first country of the Eastern Block that to change over to to democracy. The atmosphere at the airport is ancient like nowhere else in Western Europe. It is neither dirty nor simply plain, nor is it colourful. It feels more industrial than sombre, which makes Budapest seems like a town even though it is a city. And a very proud city it is too, because the first metro line in Europe is here. The trains which runs on that line now live up to the expectation for their antiquity and must be a century old.

At the airport I met Szitzo, who is to be my advisor, one boy whose name is Thomas, and another girl. They hold a placard which says 'Welcome to Budapest!', and which also has my name on it. I feel a little funny. Not only because I had only finished my exams last week and had only one week to prepare myself to come here, but also because on the plane I had constantly drunk Bloody Mary, beer and wine. I had only slept on the plane, and now since it is already getting dark here in Budapest I will need to get more sleep soon. I feel like a busy businessman who has tight schedules going to various places across the globe.

Everyone except me has his seasonal ticket. I ask Thomas how much the ticket costs and give him the money to buy the ticket. It seems like he has never bought a single ticket this way before, and it takes him sometime to find out what to do, so I know now that people here always use a seasonal ticket. They are all so earnest and nice. Thomas explains

that Szitzo is to become my advisor, after which the latter keep by my sight all the time and never stop looking at me. Her manner reminds me of a similar thing in Ritch, my host brother in New Zealand, except that here is a girl. I have never seen any girl like her. She is not slim, but she is not ugly. In fact she looks quite cute in a way. She likes sucking her thumb and the knuckles on the back of her right hand have become dark all over because she constantly bites them. Rob calls her 'Tit-so' when she is not around. I am flabbergasted the first time I heard him say it, but that describes her well enough.

The metros criss-cross one above another underground. At one station the deepest line is 50 metres below the ground level. The escalator there is in one long stretch, and it is impressively long. The shaft is wide and spacious. You stand there with the breeze to and from the tunnel on your face, and talk with each other for five minutes before you are through it. There are several pairs of escalators, not only one.

Between 1962 and 1987 Hungary had developed its economic systems and private sector. In 1988 J. Kádár, who was installed by the Soviet, quitted from his position as the head of the party. The country opened its border with Austria in May 1989. The party abandoned both Marxism and Lennism, revised its Constitution to open the way for a multi-party system, and in December 1990 changed the official name of the country to the Republic of Hungary.

Some months ago the Budapest University of Economics was still called the Karl Marx University. They changed the name after the change-over. Moreover, there used to be a huge statue in the hall in front of the university. I never see it because it was already gone when I first came here. The base for the statue is still there. I can only judge the size of the statue with this and the height of the ceiling.

We live on the second floor of our flat and commute everyday with the ground floor in an old lift. You should to be able to answer another person inside the lift in his language when he asks you which floor you need. Therefore the first thing I learn from my friends is how to count, that is in the usual pattern *egy, kettő, három, négy, öt, hat, hét, nyolc, kilenc and tíz* from one to ten. From twenty to ninety in the interval of ten are *húsz, harminc, negyven, ötven, hatvan, hetven, nyolcvan and kilencven.* This makes twenty-one *huszonegy*, just to give the idea. Of course, at the moment I only need *három.* When someone whom you do not know gives you a hassle on the street, you say, 'Nem tudom', which means *I don't know.* You say *köszönöm* or *köszönöm szépen* to thank.

When you meet someone whom you know, you say to him or her 'Jóreggelt' or 'Jónapot' depending whether or not it is morning, and then 'Hogy vagy?' or 'Hogy van?' for *How are you?* Before drinking you

say 'Egészségedre!', which means 'Cheers!', and the word for *Goodbye* is the beautiful *Viszontlátásra.* The easiest way to ask someone the direction if you have a map with you is to say 'Hol van a ...', and then point on the map the place you want to go. Hungarian is an interesting language. The fact that it is not an Indo-European language, and therefore different from other European languages in general, can be seen when you learn how *spoon and fork* becomes *kanál és villa.*

Margrid arrives from Holland. She is tall, slim, good looking and fragile, which reminds me of Daphne, Peter's girlfriend. So now Tanya has a company in her room. Their room is divided from the bathroom by a storage room where there are shelves both in front of and behind you. I keep my empty rucksack on one of these shelves. All the boys sleep in the living room. I sleep on a big sofa. Rob and Timo sleep together on the large double bed made from another sofa. Behind the bed is the kitchen. This has a long shape, with a door opens to the living room and to the front door. When I lie down, my feet point to the television and window while the back of my sofa rests against the room where Margrid and Tanya sleep.

The Hungarians call their own language *Magyar* and their country *Magyarország* or *Magyar Népköztársaság.* The Hungarian language belongs to the Finno-Ugrian branch of the Uralic family, the other branch of the latter of which is Samoyed. It is closely related to the languages Vogul and Ostyak in western Siberia. It adopted the use of roman scripts in the eleventh century, before which period it used to be written a script similar to Old Turkic runes.

Alfonso and his friend from England had been a trainee in Budapest last year, and they stayed with us when they came back to visit. After the traineeships here, he went back with his friend to England. There he stayed with his friend and his parents, and did some part-time jobs in a fast-food restaurant for several months. They planed to buy a ticket here to go to Asia on the Trans-Siberian train. He took us to visit his aunt – she might not be his real aunt, but only loved him as her nephew – and together they cooked a pasta dish for us. It tasted very nice and we loved it.

Once we all went to a Spanish party where the rhythm was four-four but people danced, I thought, like crabs walked. I did enjoy the dance and the drinks enormously. People and beautiful girls kept coming and introduced themselves to me, and a few girls asked me to dance with them, which I did and held them in my arm and held their hands. But when the slow music ended and a quicker one came up I always found myself soon losing my girls because sooner or later I always created my own ground, and it was very difficult for anyone to come close to me

when I was absorbed in my dancing. I think it was either because of my loneliness, my disappointment in, and uncertain feeling about my study, or my thought for Ace that I was releasing whenever I danced. I need neither music nor alcohol to dance, and the music needs neither be loud. After we left the party and was walking down the hill, Alfonso told us that he had told the people at the party that I was a prince. I told him I thought I was lucky to have gotten away from the party in one piece. I could have been assassinated.

Budapest comprises three towns, namely Old Buda, Buda and Pest. Old Buda has Roman remains. You do not normally go there nowadays. The river Danube divides Buda on the right-hand side from Pest on the left. The two came together in 1872 to become Budapest, the administrative, commercial, industrial and intellectual centre in one. Buda is on the hill and is the place where the city's élites live. Pest, on the other hand, can be industrial and very sombre. But it also has all the museums, opera houses and hotels. Buda was occupied by the Ottomans from 1541 to 1686 and became the capital of Hungary in 1867.

The many monuments in Budapest are baroque, neoclassic or a mixture of both in style. Under the Party all the bourgeois names of streets were changed into Marxist's ones, old monuments pulled down and new ones erected. Now some of the former come back, new ones coined and all the Communist ones going doubly-quickly.

There is a museum on the Buda side that is hidden underground, in what is a huge natural network of caves under the hill there, where you walk into an uninteresting, small dilapidated house and ten minutes later find yourself in another world, dumbfounded. There is a chamber in there where one can find all torturing instruments dated back to the time when men were no less barbarous than us. There are plenty of stalactites and stalagmites, and the caves are in tiers like floors in buildings.

There are cable cars that go a long way up the hill, passing some forests with lots of trees. You can also go up into the hills on trams along a winding route. Both these and the cable cars are an exciting experience. The latter because of the scenic view you see, the former because the route is hilly and difficult for trams. Everyday I have my lunch at the company canteen. You have to buy coupons in advance for the whole month, probably to make sure that you stay here until lunch. After lunch I am no longer needed and may come and go as I choose. Sometimes I go up the hill and there choose a nice spot among the trees in the forest to sit and look at the beautiful view. My monthly commuting pass is probably not valid for uses outside the city, but no one bothers to check and I can always say I am a new kid in town.

Thomas arrives in our flat one day from West Germany after our Ger-

man friend Timo has left. He has his car with him, and one day we go together around the country when he does the driving and I am a co-pilot. At night we sleep in our car, usually parked in the countryside just off the road, and in the morning take a bath either in a lake or in the Danube.

From the window of our flat we can see below the overhead bare wires that carry the electricity that powers the bus. Depending on the weather condition, sometimes there are coronae around these wires. Once I saw two of these slowly, but beautifully advanced down the line in spirals like two dragons. That was in the evening, not raining, the sky was red and everything looked a dull yellow touch.

Tanya is a trainee from Australia who likes playing chess, but I never play with her. Instead, we all play twenty-questions together. In this game a cryptic clue is given and everyone tries to solve it by asking up to twenty questions. The person who tells the clue also knows the answer. He may answer each question by saying only 'Yes', 'No', or 'Irrelevant'. Because the twenty-question quota belongs to all players collectively, one needs to use it sparingly. Each game normally takes several days to play, by the end of which we either have solved it or have exhausted the quota without having found the answer. It is a social game, which makes it fun to play especially when someone has asked a question while others are away and they need to be informed so that they would not ask the same question again. We have always to hold a conference where we exchange new such information.

For example there is a clue, 'A bell rang, a man died, a bell rang'. As usual the question is, 'What happened?'. In this case it turns out that a blind couple went to the beach. The husband swam out in the direction of a bell tower in a distance across the bay. At that moment the bell in the tower happened to be tolled, so he swam towards it and kept on swimming until he drowned, thinking it was his wife ringing the small bell she had in her hand so that he knew the direction.

In another problem two identical drinks were served to a pair of identical twins, who each drank one, but thereafter only one of them died. It had taken us several days but we still could not find out what the answer was. In the end we ran out our quota and hopelessly had to guess. It turns out that the drinks are really identical. There is a poison in the drink, of course, but it is inside the ice-cubes. One of the twins drained his drink in one go and the ice had no time to melt, therefore he survived. His twin, however, sipped his drink slowly and died.

Yet in another problem 'A man died. There is sawdust on the floor'. Perhaps you have already figured out the answer to this one just now, but let me reiterate it to you again anyhow. 'Of course,' you would say,

'that man was a midget whose job is to perform in a circus and the sawdust was there because his friends teased him one day by sneaking into his room while he was away and sawed a few inches off the legs of all his furniture'. When the poor midget returned, the effect this had on him was to make him think that he had grown taller. All his life he had always had this apprehension, that is to say, to grow and become fit for anything but being a midget. Thinking he shall certainly be sacked when this became known, he killed himself.

At the end of my stay I buy a train ticket to go to Praque, from where I will try to find my way to go to Warsaw to catch my Lot flight to Bangkok. At the railway station in Praque I met Tilo, an lawyer and antique dealer who comes from West Germany. The first night there I stay at the YMCA with a boy whom I met in the train. Tilo visits us in the morning and offers to give me a lift to Warsaw. He says he is going to show me around Western Europe. That suits me because I am nearly broke.

He shows me around Praque. Then we drive into East Germany where we pass a gorge with a magnificent view and see a factory where the Taban cars are stacked up on top of each other to form a pile that resembles a mountain. Taban is a local make of cars that are so small that when you sit in front one of your shoulders touches that of the driver while the other one the door.

We visit Dresden where the rubbles of the ruins since World War II are still left standing in piles like mountains one of which is that of the Frauenkirche. We hear Leonard Bernstein conducts at the end of which he receives a long standing ovation. He dies in New York before New Year.

Then we drive along the Autobahn into Poland. There is a small town near Kraków with the name of Oświęcim, or Auschwitz in German. During World War II the Nazis put one concentration camp at Auschwitz, the Auschwitz-Birkenau. Between 1940 and 1945 one and a half million people perished there, among whom were one million Jews. Thomas Keneally wrote his *Schindler's Ark* in 1982, the story of a German industrialist, Oskar Schindler, who single-handedly saved and protected hundreds of Jews from death in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. But that was before Steven Spielberg makes it into the film *Schindler's List* and so not everyone knows in 1990 what happened in Auschwitz during the German occupation.

When we drive pass Auschwitz Tilo suddenly asks whether I have heard about the concentration camps. I answer that I have. When I was fourteen, I used to watch a documentary film where the Nazis made Jewish people dig a grave and then bury them alive. It filled me with

horror. 'There were many concentration camps. Have you ever heard about the one at Auschwitz-Birkenau?', Tilo asks. 'No' is my answer. I only learn now that there were more than one concentration camp. One is already too many. Moreover, I never knew until now that there were such camps outside Germany. I only dreamt that the Nazis only hated Jews who lived in Germany and who spoke German. I would never have dreamt that they would hate those Jews who spoke Polish, for instance.

'You have to see this,' Tilo comments. With that command, he drives in at the front gate and parks his car at the car park in front which has scarcely five cars. There is a timber building close by, but we walk away from it towards another front gate which looks older and has two parallel half-circle bars on top with the writing which says,'Werk macht frei.' The car park is nearly empty. It is sunny with some cloud and there are gentle breezes.

Surrounding the camp are two layers of fences, very tall, with barb wires and perhaps electrified in the past I should say. Straight ahead the path is wide and smooth, which branches off to both sides in between rows of buildings which look like school or military buildings. The buildings have stairs of a couple of steps. We walk up the steps of one. The wooden planks make it seems like a school even more. The corridor is straight and long, again this is branched off into doors along both sides. There are black-and-white pictures hung on the walls of the corridor. The room to the right was an office of a doctor who did experiments of inexplicable sorts on the prisoners. There are portraits of young women who worked in his laboratory, and died there. The door to his office is locked.

To the left there is a door to another room. We pass through this door. It is spacious inside and with plenty of windows the room is well lit. There are a few things on exhibition. One of these there is a writing which says, 'Those who did this did not realise that we have to live with it all our lives.' It touches me so much that my eyes are filled with tears and I feel myself starting to weep. I bite my tongue until it hurts and the tears are now those of the pain I feel in my tongue. This always prevents me from giving myself away with my weeping otherwise. But the worse still has to come. There are several glass partitions on the right where items are stored in piles. These glasses go up from floor to the roof. The space inside them is wider and deeper than it is tall, and therefore is enormous. In one of these are glasses frames. You have the feeling that these are carelessly put in there by shovels. In another there are combs. Yet in another there are shoes.

I can no longer speak now, and have to turn my head away from Tilo most of the time to prevent showing my tears. My tongue also starts to hurt like it is going to bleed. When we walk out the front gate and to

the car, I am already changed. I am completely shocked and can hardly think about anything. I get into the front seat, put the seat belt on, and sit there in a stiff posture. Tilo drives along the road and on to a motorway, but for half an hour I keep looking out of the side window. Tears are still in my eyes, but more than that my mind is utterly blank. Moreover, Tilo is a German and I feel for the moment that I hate all Germans. Thus I sit for half an hour or more before thoughts start to come back to my mind again.

Kraków is known in English as Cracow. We come here after our visit to the concentration camp. It was the capital of Poland from 1320 to 1596. The Cracow University, founded in 1364 by King Casimir the Great, is only second to the University of Prague as the oldest university in Central Europe. The Union of Poland and Lithuania was signed in 1385, then queen Jadwiga d'Anjou married Władysław Jagiełło and the city became the capital of the Jagiellonian empire which, apart from Polish land, includes Lithuania and Ruthenia. In 1400 Jagiełło renovated and reformed the university with the endowment from Jadwiga. The university's name was changed to Jagiellonian University. It was here that during the fifteenth century one of its graduates, Nicolaus Copernicus, developed his heliocentric theory. We enter and walk around inside the university. We look at the old wooden desks and the beautiful stained-glasses that line the wall, which I feel deserve a better protection if only because the country is now opening up. There is a big quadrangle of a market place here in the middle of the city where thousands of people gather on many occasions, for example during the Corpus Christi procession and on the festival which marks the first day of spring. On one side of the courtyard stands the Cloth Hall with its long, covered walk way lined with beautiful archs. There is a watch tower where a soldier blows the trumpet beautifully to tell the time, the tune of which he always dutifully leaves unfinished, pretending to have been shot in the act by a stray bullet like one of his predecessor whose death in such manner has created this tradition.

From Kraków we come next to Warsaw. Here we park our car on the road, only to find the window smashed, my rucksack stolen and with it all my belongings. It is during the FA Cup, so the police could not help us much. Anyhow, with the ridiculous inflation rate of 3–700 per cent this kind of thing happens so often that even without football to distract your attention you become used to it by and by. I have lost perhaps three sets of slides, two books on Geometry written by a Hungarian mathematician, a beautiful handmade chess set, my diary together with the addresses of people I have met and such information it contains, a long bread knife which I used to brandish when hassled by a tramp during the trip that

Thomas and I made together, pages cut from Magrid's old magazines and all my clothes except what I have on today. I always put my camera on the carpet on the floor, and it was still there when we found out what happened to the car. But all the slides I took with it are gone. I am completely disheartened and suddenly feel lonely for the first time since I arrived in Budapest three months ago. For some time I cry to my heart's content. But in the end I console myself with the thought that we arrive in this world bringing nothing with us, and likewise when we leave this place we shall be able to take nothing away with us. So there is no use our wailing over material losses, since even our lives, which are the only thing of importance to us, we are sure one day to lose.

Afterwards we walk the street of Warsaw. In a sunny weather Tilo introduces me to a nice Polish girl he has just met. She studies at a university, majoring in English Literature. Talking with her puts my mind of the sadness of my loss. There is no use crying over spilled milk. Not long ago I would have argued that this is no mere milk. But the girl sitting opposite me now is so alive. For one thing, she does not realise what has just happened to my dear rucksack. In any case, life goes on no matter what happens to you.

A skinny man in greatcoat walks out from a shoe shop. He barely reach the nearest street corner when from inside the same shop two big men stalk him down in strides, flank and hold him by the shoulder, turn him gently around, open the lapels of the man's coat, extract a pair of shoes hidden there and then let go of him. It all seems more like normal proceedings rather than a thief caught.

Passing through the Custom counter at the Ḍaunmuang Airport in Bangkok an officer asks me, 'Things to declare?' 'No,' says I, 'this is all I have. I was robbed', showing him the small supermarket bag in my hand. He remains silent for half a second, taking my words in, then says with a compassionate tone, 'Go on'.

Back at the university proves nothing like getting into a pan. This is my last year for the first time there.

The results of the previous semester that I receive from the Engineering faculty are very good this time, I am pleased when I see them. I am given a certificate of merit for having done above 3.5 for the semester, my score is a little more than 3.6, so it is about as great a swing upward as the swing downward in the semester before. What I am glad about it, however, is that even when there was a risk of being retired if I could not get out of the probation this time, I took no unrelated subjects in order to rescue myself as most people usually do even when they are in situations far less tight than mine.

Ace leaves me for one Japanese business man whose salary seems a

fortune to me. This is to be the time when the Japanese yen is at it strongest point. The bubbles have not yet bursted and even if it had, I doubt whether it would have made any difference when you compare the currency with the Thai baht. The Thai currency is still unwisely pegged with the United States dollar.

I try almost every possible way, and impossible ones too for that matter, to get Ace back, but it is obvious that she has already made up her mind. Ben says, 'Then she is not worthy of you, and it is the more better that she leaves you now.' I agree with him long after this, but now I nearly die for it. I go to Kò and Ḅaị's room at the Dormitory I of Chula and say that I need to talk to someone. Kò says, 'Come back tomorrow. I have an exam tomorrow's afternoon, and I have not yet finished preparing for it.'

'Drop your exams for half an hour. I am going to die unless I talk with someone now,' I said.

'You can go with him, Ḅaị,' says Kò

'Oh no, you can not! I have a student to teach in five minutes,' Ḅaị says.

'But you can postpone it, can you not?', I ask him.

'Not this time. She will be here any minute. And we could not make it last week, and she has exams coming up. It's impossible for me to cancel today's lesson. If I do she will probably not talk to me again, and you know it is not easy to find students these days,' he said.

'I know you can do it. She will believe everything you say. All your students do,' I plead.

'Don't praise me! It won't work. Unless I keep my promise, none of my students will ever believe what I say again,' then he continues, 'You go with him, Kò! For Goodness' sake! You can see how Nui is dying, and you still worry about your exams. To hell with your 'A'! You are going to get it anyway. I know it's your favourite subject, Strength of Material!' 'OK! I will blame you, Ḅaị, if I don't get an 'A' this time,' he says, 'Let's go. Where shall we talk?' 'We can walk to the university and back, and talk along the way.' So that is what we do while I tell him about everything I know, which honestly speaking is not really much. At one point I could go on no further and have to sit down because I feel like fainting, my eyes are going black. As I still see black everywhere having already sat down, I next lie down on my back right there on the footpath. It must be a sight to see, Kò squatting down listening to me lying on my back, both oblivious of passersby on their way to the bus stop not ten metres away. All covered in cold sweats I cry like a baby. After a while I already feel better, a crisis has just passed and I feel I have changed as well as exhausted, so we walk back quite early and Kò

gets an 'A' in his exam as Ḅaị said.

I go to the practising room where the Judo team practice for the Olympics. Having never done any Judo before except a bit of rolling I practise with them. Not all of those who are here are going to the Olympics. I am in the white belt, the lowest on the rung, while the man she has chosen is in the black belt, the highest. He is doing and discussing moves with members of the team. Ace is mad with me for being there and our relationship is as hopeless as ever but, since it could not have been worse, I no longer care about her disapproval; I am desperate now. After the practice I follow them in my car to where she lives with her grandmother. They stopped to eat something at a restaurant close to the place and I wait in my car for over one hour before deciding to go back to my apartment since they still have not come out.

A few days later I ambush her while she is on her way to practise. She reprimands me severely for what I have done. I say nothing but plead. We go to an open restaurant in the market where we used to go several times before. We order beers and Ace drinks like a camel before going to her practice. She comes fourth in the Olympics. It must have been my fault and the beer, but I no longer care. I despise her now for having made me suffer.

> Red as the roses of the May time that bloom in bright array,
> love in my heart is deeming and drives my tears away.
>
> Alone it grew in secret, it knew no dark nor light.
> A phantom flower that never can fade in mortal sight.
>
> And though the Winter rages, my rose is lovelier yet.

Then one day I walked into an office building in Ṣịlom and became a life insurance agent for the American Insurance Association. Here I work in the Cakràvạ̀l Unit and our subgroup is headed by Sinịnạ̀t. The trainings for the agents are so intense it seems like brain-washing. You talk about all prospects of relationship with clients, but always the objective is to sell a policy. For this we have conferences, seminars and camps. Whatever the virtues of risk-management are, the Americans have managed to make us a hideous band.

I have managed to sell some policies, most of the time to people whom I already know. Only once or twice do I sell them to a complete stranger. To all my clients I feel very guilty after I have quitted being an agent. But insurance looks so sound and promising to me before when I was in Europe. I probably shall never understand how the Americans manage to turn it into an uncompassionate business. There are examples of similar things in other fields, for example when the Internet was created in the U.S. it was for a military purpose, that is to counter the possible attack

on centres of command. Then came a European who turned it into a benefit for all by creating the World Wide Web browser.

§

I now work at Loxley in Bangkok under Ḅuẏśakḍi. With the standing monthly salary of 10,000 bahts, I am a sales engineer who sells the circuit breakers of Unilec. Loxley is a trading company which used to be half owned by some English many years ago, but which is now totally in the hand of the Làṃxaṃ family. The only person in the board of director now who is not Thai is Ronald James Savage who comes from Singapore, and who is to be my boss for a year later on in my career.

One of the first projects that I have been assigned is the Residential Condominium project of the Muangthong Thani (Muangdaung Dhạnị) residential development project in the northern part of Bangkok. The ground of the project lies between the Càobrayạ (Chao Phraya) river and the Vibhạvàdị–Rangsit Road which leads to the Daunmuang (Donmuang) Airport. Though the amount of sales is small at this stage, it is crucial for a great many future prospects of sales to come. If it is successful, there will be no doubt that we will be able to supply more of similar things to them in the future.

There are many parties involved in a big engineering project like this. There are the owner, architects, engineering consultants, contractors, suppliers, and sub-contractors. We are the one but last party on the list, a supplier. We try to sell our products to a sub-contractor, with one hope in mind that we will be able to do more business directly with the contractors after this. I know how to read some French, and since Unilec is a French product and all parties involved, except the owner and some suppliers, are French, I have been assigned to look after the project.

I do not remember having spoken a single French word in my whole career selling Unilec. But my boss unnecessarily feels himself quite dependent on me. He used to bring me along to meetings even when there was no need for me to be there and it is good that he did, because a sometimes I could pick up what our prospective customers said among themselves in French in our presence and tell him afterwards what they really think, and this is useful for us to know. Loxley had never been successful before in previous projects with Muangdaung Dhạnị, and I became the first sales engineer in the company to sell circuit breakers to the project. Even though ours are also French products, previous projects tend to buy only from Malin Gelin, for instance, which is also a French product. After my first success two more senior sales who are engineers, and that means everybody, have been assigned to help me with trying to secure future sales with the project.

We make a perfect team and mine is the easiest of all the jobs, es-

sentially to talk with the customers. At about this time I decide that I want to go back to the university to study for another degree in Electrical Engineering. At Chula (Cuĺạ) you can do this without having to take another entrance exam if you are already a graduate from the Engineering Department there. My boss agrees to let me come and go between the university and the company as I wish since I am the only one there who could really coordinate with the customers. It is understanding some cultural background of your customers which makes you understand them as a person. My knowledge of the French language, for example, makes me understand the accent of French people when they speak English. The two engineers who help me are Vanjay whose technical expertise is excellent, who looks after all the technical part, and Kēk whose standing job is to entertain, which explains why his eyes are often red from drinking with customers the previous night.

One morning I arrive at the company, after having attended my morning class at the university, to find the whole office unusually quiet. I ask a colleague who sit working at a computer in the computer room how things are going and she said, 'The big boss has been in a bad mood all morning. You'd better ask him yourself what's the matter because he had asked for you several times.' I knock on the door of his office, enter, and say 'Good morning!' to him and ask him how everything is going, 'I have heard from Ḅuppha ̣ that you have asked for me a few times.' 'Where have you been,' he said, 'the westerners called and we don't know what they want. There's no one here to talk with them, so they hung up. They had probably got mad at us. You'd better call them back to find out what they want.' I said, 'I just come back from the university. You have my studying timetable. Don't worry, I am going to call them straight away.' I leave his office for my desk and make my call. A French engineer at the sub-contractor had wanted to find out one small technical value of our low-voltage circuit breaker, which does not appear in the technical manual that we gave him. I do not know, and so have to ask Biar who is an experienced salesman though not an engineer. He readily looks up the value for me within thirty seconds, and I tell the engineer the value over the phone, for which he gives me many thanks. Soon after this we are all laughing and Biar says, 'Why didn't he say so if that's what he wanted?' Over the phone the boss couldn't understand the poor engineer, so he asked everyone around for someone to help and got frustrated when no one there was able to come to his rescue. Laughing I smile inside. Everyone here has probably learnt and know all the English grammar, yet there was no one who could answer a simple question a customer asked in English over the phone.

Vanjay is knowledgeable in many things, not only in technical knowl-

edge. He tells us about the two barbarous *imperial* dishes in China which he calls the Bear Paw and the Ape Brain. For the former, people would cut off both paws of a big bear whom they have trapped in the forest. These paws they cook, hairs and all, which become an extremely dainty dish while the bear they set free who, left to fend for itself without the paws, would soon afterwards die. The latter dish, the Ape Brain, is where a monkey, tied to a chair and placed beside the table, has his skull cut all around by a saw and lifted off. The brain of this half-brother of ours is then eaten while the owner is still alive, move about, and look at you in the eyes. Every time I think of it I feel a chill running down my spine. I have heard that these have been shown in documentary programmes on the television, and that they have set animal-rights groups the world over running about mad, as they should.

§ **Security Officer**

I start applying for a new job after I have resigned from Loxley. I come to TelecomAsia one day to write an application form. The Human Resource department sends me to Suri for an interview. He asks me a few general questions. It is more like a casual conversation than an interview until he says, 'OK! Now I will ask you a question and I want you to think carefully before giving me an answer.' 'Suppose that it is your responsible to control the access to a mainframe computer here. There are operators who work in shifts. Each operator does exactly the same tasks as the others. Would you, one, assign one username and password for all operators or, two, assign a separate username and password for each of them?' I think for a while and then say that I would choose the second choice. 'Why?', says Suri, 'Your answer is correct. But what makes you choose the second-, rather than the first choice?' 'A username is like a person,' I say, 'You need to be able to tell who does what to be able to say who is responsible for which action.'

The company has me trained to become a security officer. My position says a 'System Analyst', but I hardly write any Job Control Language code though I have learnt that here too. A security officer looks after the security of computer systems and files. His is no autonomous jobs, but he is to a certain degree independent in his job from the peck and call of is boss. For one thing, he himself decides how much access his own boss should have of the systems he looks after.

As the first security officer of the company I have to design all the procedures. Trainings are often and intense. At home, in our company, I am surrounded by teachers. There are Bob who has been a security officer for no less than fifteen years, John who has been a system programmer for the past ten years or so and Sombuṛṇa, a Thai who also works for Computer Associates who, like Bob, also specialise in security systems.

There are at least five systems programmers, but only John to teach them; I am the only security staff of the company and both Sombụrṇa and Bob are here mainly to teach me.

There are also trainings away from the company, that is at premises of the various manufacturers and providers. For these I go to Anderson Consulting on Vibhạvàdị–Rangsit Road and IBM on Bảholyọdhin Road. Our company is in a large building called the 'Fortune Tower'. 'A Fortune Tower but no Fortune Town's', or vice versa I used to think to myself. It is on the Rajàdạ́bhisẹk Road at the crossroad where Channel 9 is. Still neither the Rama IX Road, the BTS Sky Train, nor the Ḍaunmuang Tollway is here. The traffic of this city has been at its worst for a decade. We are seeing things approaching their percolative point before all the crises come in a few year's time, in 1997, like the last straw that breaks the camel's back some would say.

The term *hacker* started at MIT in the early 1960s and had a meaning similar to *expert*. Later the term came to mean *someone who hacks*, and from then on became inseparable from another term, *freak* or specifically *phone freak*, because you usually have to freak before you hack. Johny Draper, aka Captain Crunch, blew a whistle that came inside a cereal box into telephones to make free long-distance call. The whistle produced the 2,600Hz tone needed to fool the phone system. In the early 1980s FBI arrested hackers for breaking into many organisations. The Legion of Doom was formed in the U.S. and the Chaos Computer Club in Germany. The Hacker Quarterly 2600 is founded to share tips on phone and computer hacking. Kevin Mitnick monitors email between MCI and Digital Equipment in late 1980s. First National Bank of Chicago became the victim of a $ 70 million computer crime. A raid was on for Fry Guy in Indiana, while in Atlanta Legion of Doom hackers Prophet, Leftist and Urvile were raided. Hackers broke into the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Air Force, CIA, NASA, *etc.*

In 1995 a British journalist gets together with some English hackers in a small hotel. They hack into the computer systems of MI5 and manage to pass themselves as the John Major, and he publishes an article in a newspaper to let the world know about it.

I have always wanted to work for a while in an engineering position. Being a security officer is all right, but once all the procedures are in place the job becomes routine, especially so when the systems you look after are mainframes. Because the company would not hear about transferring me to an engineering position, I decide to find a new job. Before I go I teach and train two new security officers to take my place. Both go on to become managers and work for the Security Section for a long time. Many system programmers want to take over the security aspect of the

systems because for one thing it makes their life easier. But easier is only what it seems to an inexperienced managers. Most managements, however, know that the idea is imbecility, as preposterous it seems as having as an auditor the accountant.

§

I worked for the company called Jasmine as an electrical engineer. I started my work there about the same time that I moved into the new house which my father bought. It was in the northern part of Bangkok, straight up north from the Royal Palace. But the northern part of Bangkok with respect to the centre of gravity of the city is much further east to where we are, since the city is shaped like a fan opening out towards the east. I still loved Mhăm, but I didn't know why I never invite her over to my new place when I first moved there. She found herself a new lover in these first few months and I was utterly heart broken when I found out. I thought I would never have been that way again, but I was wrong.

I had been making my own furniture almost every day since I first moved into our new place. I made blocks, to be tiered up one on top of each other and used as bookcases. I made about ten of these and painted them white. It must have taken me at least a month before I finished the last one of them. I made them in the morning before I went to work. I bought a small electric saw which I used for cutting the ply woods. The saw proved too loud, so I bought ear plugs. When I was done with the bookcases, I started on an easy chair. I always worked on these DIY's for about half an hour each morning. I must have disturbed my neighbours every morning with the sound of my electric saw.

Meanwhile, I learnt Chinese at the Chulalongkorn University in the evening, three days a week. It had been very difficult to drive into the city to the class from work, because of the traffic. Even if I left the office early, it still took me more than one hour to get there. Very often I was late. But even when I was held in a stand-still traffic, and I knew I would not be able to make it to the class, I still persevered along. Never once did I turn around and gave up. Sometimes I reached the university after the class had already finished. This kind of *idée fixe* is at times good, but most often bad. It keeps you running around all the time, leaving no time for yourself or to reflect.

My father always wake up at five o'clock in the morning. I don't know how he manages it without an alarm clock. Sometimes my internal clock works with precision and I find myself waking up at six or seven o'clock as I have planned, but most of the time it doesn't. Anyway, I can never manage to wake up at five in the morning. One morning when he happened to be in Bangkok he said to me as I was about to get into the

car to go to work, 'When are you going to get married?' I said, 'I don't know whom I could get married to,' and felt like crying. Since Mhăm left me I still had not recovered from my sadness. That much my father knew, I did not know why he asked me the question.

'Then why don't you go to England now to study?' He knew I had been accepted by a few universities there but did not have enough money.

'I've got some money that I was going to give to you when you get married. But if you are not going to get married to anyone soon, you can use the money for your study.' Less than one month after he said this, I had secured the visa, plane ticket, and study leave without pay from the company.

§

The computer centre at the University of Manchester is not just a university computer centre. It controls among other things all the consensus data for the middle part of England. Manchester must be very familiar with computers, since Alan Turing lived and discovered his Turing Machine here. The first stored programme computer, the *Baby*, was developed by Manchester University in 1948. Turing Machine has become the model for all machines with a central processing unit, while the Baby the model for modern computers which use software.

John Owens wanted to leave his money to his friend, George Faulkner, but the latter persuaded him to use it for the benefit of others, so he left £96,654 which started off the Owens College in March 1851. The college was then in the house of Richard Cobden on Quay Street off Deansgate. At that time Frederick Engels lived at the Whitworth Park and Karl Marx often visited him. During its first twenty years the College had always been criticised by the media. The university moved to Oxford Road in 1873. Then the Sunday Review said, 'Anyone educated in Manchester would certainly be dull and probably vicious!' In 1903 it received Royal Charter and became the Victoria University of Manchester. Ernest Rutherford came here in 1907, received his Nobel Prize in 1908, and later moved to Cambridge. After the war, Sir Bernard Lovell pioneered the first large scale radio telescope at Jodrell Bank observatory. Freddie Williams and Tom Kilburn developed in 1948 *The Baby*, the first modern computer. Queen Elizabeth visited the campus on its centenary celebration. Fifty years later her daughter, aka Queen Elizabeth II, opens the new Manchester Aquatics Centre on Oxford Road.

To some, Manchester is known not for inventions but for the river Mersey that runs through it, and yet to others for its university, museums and a *15:th* century cathedral. However, this is in 1995 and the city is at its trough. In a way this city is the capital city of the British Labour while London is both the actual capital of the country and home

to the Conservative Britain. You can almost see the parallel by seeing how we have the Greater Manchester similarly to London the Greater London. Therefore it is no surprise that under a Conservative Britain the city should be forgotten. Everything shrinks away from its surrounding towards its own centre of safety. Dangerous back-streets crop up and multiply in number, and with it the number of things you have access to decreases. Things go from bad to worse and Moss Side becomes ridiculously dangerous. I passed it one morning on the outer rim and it seemed to me like a stronghold.

Since 1972 the library of the University of Manchester has merged with the John Rylands Library which was founded in the late 19th century by Mrs. Enriqueta Rylands as a public library. The new library is now called the John Rylands Library. The library has three premises; the original one at Deansgate, the one at the university on Oxford Road, and the Labour History Archive and Study Centre, located at the National Museum of Labour, which holds the archives of the Labour Party and the Communist Party of the U.K. I only use the one at the university. It is so big that I used to lose my way in it. There is hardly any book I want that is not there. It is strange that this quiet town has such a big library.

The John Rylands Library on Deansgate was built between 1890 and 1899. It was designed by Basil Champneys. Conservation is a controversial issue. The safest rule of thumb is I think to no opinions of your own whatsoever once you have decided to preserve something, or else never call your work conservation but some other names, for example renovation. In this case Champneys changed the plan of his building's roof to make it incombustible according to the wish of Lady Rylands. In 2001 some want to rebuild the roof to be in accord with the original plan proposed by the architect, which of course never have existed. But with the architect and all the concerned party being already dead, I think, all conservation works should only follow what have existed when the complete building existed for the first time. In other words, Conjectures are no conservation.

When money nearly runs out, I start working in Thai restaurants and perform Thai swords and Blaung Fai for their owners who are active organising Thai Boxing tournaments. I am called 'Master Kit', but live poorly because I would not teach for money and I must set aside some of what I earn for my future study. But with the help of Amanda, Vuḍhijay and Maṇob I find a scholarship for doing a post-master research in Japan. By this time I have been living in the restaurant for a few months already. One day I walk away and for a while become homeless. A week afterwards I submit my master degree dissertation, and a few days after that board

a JAL flight for Japan.

§

I went to Japan in 1995 right after having finished my M.Sc. dissertation at UMIST. One day I saw on a notice board, I think at the Control System Centre, that the Japan government was going to give a few scholarship for students from UK to do Ph.D. in Japan. Accordingly I attended the meeting held by the Japan Office at the university. There Amanda gave a briefing. Afterwards she gave me an application form.

I needed to be accepted by a university teacher over there first because Monbushō, the Department of Education, would only give the money but not the place. I remembered Òan of the Engineer'73 class so I emailed him to ask whether he could help me find a teacher or give some suggestion. He duly replied that his supervisor had only recently had a few new students, and that he would not be looking for more this year. He then gave me the email address of Hūy and suggested that I wrote to him. Hūy was also of the Engineer'73, and the best in his class, which means that he finished his degree with the gold medal first honour distinction. He is best all around. When I wrote to him he said a similar thing to Òan's, but he also said that he would ask Jim for me. Jim is about four years my senior while Hūy and Òan was three years my junior. When I talked to Suchin about Jim, he said he knew him. Suchin is one year Jim's senior while Jim and Vaàràbongṣ, my first degree supervisor, are from the same class. What a small world for Chula graduates!

Jim's supervisor was Katsuhisa. He is a professor at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, the same as Hui's supervisor, Nakano. Nakano was the head of the Control System Department. Katsuhisa used to be in that department, and they are good friends. But when I arrived he had just formed a new department of his own called the Department of Mechanical and Environmental Informatics. I think this was only a strategic move in order to get more funding from the university or the government. The word 'environmental' had suddenly become a fad in Japan as elsewhere.

With Jim's help I was accepted by Katsuhisa. Everybody says that he speaks like a Japanese, and he was the assistance, kyoshu, to Katsuhisa. Once accepted by a teacher, the rest was easy with Monbusho. It was Jim who wrote a recommendation letter from him to Monbusho on my behalf. There are two ways in which an overseas student can obtain a Monbusho scholarship. You either pass the exam or you are recommended by a professor there. The competition for the scholarship was so fierce in Thailand that would have been excluded right at the beginning from my lower average final result, which means that I would not even have been able to apply let along take the exam. In Manchester then this was

totally different. Either I was the only one, or there was only another person who applied to go to Japan that year. I had been worried about how to find means to fund myself through a Ph.D. study, so you could well imagine that when there was this opportunity coming up I did my best trying to get it. I did all the correspondences by emails. Amanda sent the application forms and all the document for me by DHL, which I know must have costed the office a fortune because I had used the service before when I worked at Loxley. She also made telephone calls to Japan a few times for me, and I had talked with Hùy a few times. This is when I heard for the first time the phrase 'Moshi moshi!' that is used for the first 'Hullo!' used when calling calling someone on the phone. In Thai this, from the latter above, is 'HalhǪ' while in Chinese it is 'Wéi!'. I would not have been able to go to Japan if it were not for what Amanda had done for me. I would have considered it an unwise thing to do if I had to squander the meagre fund, about five hundred pounds, that I had been saving for the cost of a possible Ph.D. study at UMIST. When I told her that I had been doing some volunteer works for the Community Action, she said so had she when she was a student. She told me that a Japanese student asked her to marry him because he wanted to live in the UK, and she decided to decline. I will never ask a woman to marry me in order that I could stay in a country. I could have asked Amanda the same question she had been asked, because I like her. I don't think I would have dared, and I don't know whether she would say 'No', or worse, whether she would despise me if I did.

For another reason I nearly decided to pull out half way through the process of application. My general physician, Dr. Sree, told me there's a ten pound fee for the chest x-ray and the health certificate. I thought ten pounds was a lot of money, considering that it was only for the application and that they had not yet told me that I could go to Japan should I prove to be in a good condition. When Dr. Sree told me this, I said I would like to have my chest x-rayed anyway, if only because I smoked. But Dr. Sree said, 'It would make no difference. You would need to pay ten pounds for the x-ray anyway because it is for a personal use, not as a part of a diagnostic procedure.'

'I need a routine check-up anyway, especially because I smoke.'

'That would not make any difference. A routine check-up is not included under your exemption. Your NHS certificate only covers the prescriptions.'

'Well, ten pounds is too much money for me. I don't think I can afford it. Could you not do the x-ray for a diagnosis, then, I do feel something in my chest or in my lung. It feels somewhat tense sometimes.'

'Where is it? this tense feeling in your chest.' I pressed at a point

three inches above the solar plexus, and he caressed it for a while and then said, 'There's nothing there. You haven't got any symptom for me to justify a diagnosis. You will need to pay the ten pounds for the x-ray.'

'I feel something when I breathe. I seem that I can not take a deep breath as I used to be able to.'

'There's nothing wrong with you. You just try to make an excuse to have a free medical certificate. The certificate is for your personal use, and so you need to pay ten pounds.'

'Please, ten pounds is a lot of money for me. I have been working very hard at restaurants to save money for my study. This is only for the application form and I don't know whether I will be successful or not. If I can not get the scholarship, I will probably need the money for my study here.'

'That's not my concern. All I know is that you want me to lie for your personal cause, which I will not do.'

'I'm just asking you to help me. Anyway, who would really know whether there is anything wrong with me until you see the x-ray film?'

'It's no use. You have to pay ten pounds.'

'Would it be possible that I only pay it if my health is good?'

'No, you have to pay it before taking the x-ray.'

'But if there is something wrong with me, I would need medication. And the x-ray would have turned out to be diagnostic, wouldn't it? Moreover, then I would probably not be able to go to Japan, but have to stay here in the UK. And I will need every penny for my study. I have been fighting hard to fund myself through my study. I am living a hard life. I not only work in a restaurant, but live there! You have obviously been a student yourself, and probably have got a son. Please help a poor student in his good cause!'

'No use arguing. You are wasting my time. There are other patients waiting to see me whom I need to see more than you. Either you pay the ten pounds or I do not give you a health certificate.'

'Could you give me some discount?'

'OK! I will give you a certificate for half the price. You can pay only five pounds.'

So he gave me a certificate for five pounds. I can not remember whether I paid the money to him or whether I paid it to the reception. Neither can I remember whether there was a receipt for x-ray, but I thought there was.

'I nearly had to quit the application,' I told Asim after I had learnt that I was going to go to Japan, 'I did not have enough money for the x-ray, and my doctor gave me half a price.' 'He should have helped you,' Asim said, ' He should not have let you pay. Considering what you have

been through trying hard for your study, I think he's hard-hearted.' 'It's already good that he let me pay only half the price. Since I can go to Japan now, it no longer matters.'

§

I think Katsuhisa tries to pick on me all the time. It is my turn now to present something interesting at our weekly seminar. I have chosen a topic of polytope of polynomials. The uncertainty in the parameters can be represented as a polytope whose dimension is equal to the number of parameters. By studying this polytope, one will know many things about the system. I planned to talk in Japanese, but Katsuhisa interrupts right at the beginning and says that he prefers English. I think he wants other students to get used to listening to English. Anyhow, I can speak English better than I can Japanese.

One thing I learn from Katsuhisa is that the first part of a technical paper, up to the first half, is the most important. Here he would demand that you get every single point clear, not only to yourself but also to other people. You have to read all the literature referred to in the first half of a paper. You have to be able to explain everything. The latter part of a paper is usually left out or passed over quickly. I agree with him. A paper always starts by introducing the topic, and is as good as a good lecture. All the originalities come next, and after these only investigation results and conjectures.

I am not good at doggedly deriving every single equations when I read a paper. If I do this, it hinders me so that I can not see the overall paper as a whole. Instead of getting the point that it tries to get across, its theme, I would only get bogged down by petty details and the subject seems to lose its appeals and its hold on me. I need to have some faith when I read. I can often tell by instinct whether an idea sounds right. I only pay attention to details when I write.

When I am tired of being bombarded by too many disbelieving questions, I often think to myself, 'What an unimaginative, mechanical mind.' 'What's the use of proving someone else wrong,' I think, 'If you do not believe what I say, then just keep it to yourself! Or just disprove me and leave me alone. What is the use of hammering people's head again and again. Once is enough, more than that would be bullying.'

Today Katsuhisa says to me after the seminar that he thinks I am more stupid than his students. But I think I am way more imaginative than most. The seminar has gone one hour longer than planned because I am a slow speaker and also because he questions me with imbecile questions all the time. Even when a question is useful, it will still be imbecile if not put tactfully enough. He comes into the student room where we sit and asks me how I could have gotten my master degree. He said, 'Most of

my students are better than you, even the undergraduate students. How could UMIST have given you an M.Sc.? You would not have been able to get a master degree from here.'

'I have not been the best student in my class. In fact I was one of the worst,' I replied. The study at the Control System Centre over there is by far more difficult, and the lectures better in quality than what I have seen here so far.

'How could the standard of UMIST be so low.' I made no reply.

'What did you study in your course there. Didn't they teach you anything?', he stormed.

'I studied for nine months and then did a research for three months. Even though my exam results were not good compared with my classmates, I did complete my degree quicker than anyone,' I told him.

'How many subjects did you have to study?'

'About five courses. Or six in all including one Design Exercise. But each subject is actually made up of three different subjects. So there are actually about fifteen subjects,' I related.

'What are they, these subjects?'

'Let me see if I can remember them all. There is the Classical Control, Modern Control, Self-tuning taught by Martin,' I said, 'You know him. Then there are Nonlinear System ...'

'Who teaches the Nonlinear System?,' he interrupted.

'Peter. He wrote a very good book on Nonlinear.' The book is both profound and concise.

'That's OK. And then?'

'And then there is Physical Modelling,' the subject is very interesting and the methods using the Hamiltonians work like magic in modelling, 'Adaptive Control, Mathematics in Control Systems, Signal Processing ...'

'Who teaches Mathematics in Control?' I told him the last name of David, the co-supervisor of my project.

'Fine,' said he and then, 'who else have taught you?' I said proudly that John has also taught me, and I thought he was a wonderful teacher, at which he disagrees with me. According to the professor this teacher of mine had several papers published in some of the most famous journals in Control Systems, but then disappeared. 'Such inconsistency in the outputs,' he said, 'never comes from a good teacher'. 'And no good students are possible if their teachers are no good', he concluded.

I assume that the two have never met each other, and judging someone you have never met by your own values are no very nice, so I became disillusioned. Though this disillusionment never escalates, it remains until the day when I finally quit my study.

§

In Japan many people use bicycles. Polices patrol the streets on bicycles. This makes the cities very safe, because there are always polices around everywhere even in back streets. It is generally known that you can cycle on any footpath. There is close to nowhere where bicycles are not allowed.

I do not buy a bicycle here; I bring one back from Thailand with me when I visit the country. I have it registered with the police. It is compulsory to do this because the government wants to crack down on bicycle theft. For this there is a small charge, which is quite expensive if you think in term of the Thai currency. You are given a document to certify your ownership and a yellow sticker is put on the frame of your bicycle, usually just below the seat. The adhesive of this sticker is so strong you can never peel it off; I once tried but could not. Normally the shop where you buy your bicycle will do the certificate for you. But in my case I have to go to the police and ask for one. At first I was a bit worried because I am afraid I might be questioned where I got the bike from, since it was obviously not a new bike. But the police I went to asked no questions.

§

In September 1997 I went to Singapore to present one paper at a conference. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering branch in Singapore is so poorly organised that they have made a lot of mistakes regarding my paper. Firstly, they failed to write to ask for the camera-ready copy of the paper. My paper, *Simulation Techniques using RLS Algorithm for Object-location Problem,* has been accepted by both of the two referees based in Europe who wrote that I would hear the final decision from Singapore. Singapore never wrote, that is to say, not until it was already impossible to include my paper in the proceedings of the conference. Nevertheless they want me to come and present the paper anyway, I think because they still want to have the registration fee from me. Since my supervisor Katsuhisa would not pay for the conference, I pay myself to come here.

Geewah is here with his wife Jocelyn, and I arranged with him via email to come and stay with them during the conference. I arrive the Changi Airport just after midnight on 1st September with my rucksack and my camera box. I walk from the airport along the left hand side of the highway to the Bayview Hotel, which is in the city, where the conference is held. I take some picture of the street light using my small tripod, so small it comes within nine inches long when folded, and a shutter release. The highway runs straight ahead, and it is pretty straight forward to walk along once you are on it. It took me a while before I could find

the highway at the airport where it was quite dark. The highway is well flooded with orange light. There are plenty of trees along both sides, and where I walk I can see at a regular interval the leaves lit from behind by the street lamps, which, together with the warm breeze of the tropic, gives you a peaceful feeling. There are cars only at long intervals. At one point I find a bay. There I sit on a wooden desk watching in the dark the ocean, the dim contour of the shore lines, the distant light from ships, and listening to the sound of the waves. I stay here a little while, sometimes lying flat on my back on the table which has a kind of roof on top of it.

When I arrive at the city it is already light. I walk along a park by the sea where I meet some people jogging. There are more cars on the streets, but it is still at least two hours before the offices start. Asking my way two or three times I finally find the hotel. It is still more than half an hour before the registration starts. I walk around and then up to a loft. I find myself a long concrete bench which is half concealed from the path. There I lie down on my back looking at the blue morning sky with some cloud above, just relaxing.

After the registration starts, I introduce myself to Dr. Teo and hand him my paper to be photocopied and inserted in the proceedings. Some more mistakes are made and I find out later, when they have already made all the copies, that they could not even sequence page numbers correctly. What is a Ph.D. good for, I wonder, if you can not even do this simple job correctly!

I never stay for too long in a conference. Generally I only attend the opening lecture and the session that I present a paper. I am usually there during the coffee and the lunch breaks, but for the rest of the time I normally go outside and walk around. On that first day I walk around the city in the afternoon. I find a swimming pool and swim there in the hot sun. The reflection from the bottom of the pool makes it a little unpleasant, but the breezes of the open air quite compensate for that. I still have with me all my belongings. Singapore may be safe from theft, but I put all my things down at the far end of the pool directly in line with the lane where I am swimming, and I swim in such a way that I can keep my eyes on them at all time. Or at least my eyes are on them most of the time as I swim the butterfly stroke towards, and the back stroke away from them. There are only the brief moments when my head is under the water during the butterfly stroke that I can not keep watch of my things. I am very much addicted to swimming because it gives me a kind of relaxation that makes me feel completely a new person afterwards.

I go back to the hotel again in the afternoon. I get in through a side

door and go into in a toilet close by where I put on my jacket and tie, have some coffee and cookies before going off. In the evening Geewah meets me at the station close to where he lives at the appointed time, and then we walk to his apartment. More than 85 percents of Singaporeans live in flats, built and maintained by the Housing and Development Board, over 91 percents of which are owned by the people who live in them. You can only buy these HDB flats if you are a citizen of Singapore. They are located in housing estates which are self-contained with everything one may need, from supermarket and school to sport and recreational facilities. Their flat has got one living-room, two bedrooms, and one study. Geewah has his Ph.D. thesis published as a book, and is now working on another book. His Ph.D., which he did at UMIST with Dr. Cook, is on Fuzzy Control. Dr. Cook is specialised in the Nonlinear System, and he always tilts his head to one side when he gives a lecture. He speaks with a Mancunion accent where the vowel *u* is pronounced as it is in German.

§

I seldom watch television. It is always said that your Japanese will greatly and quickly improve if you regularly watch the TV, so I guess this is the reason why my Japanese never improves. The trouble is that I don't like watching game shows, and these are in plenty here. Game shows are programmes which make people do funny or crazy things, and put them to compete with one another. I much prefer documentary programmes, but these normally come as short digression within game shows. I once saw somewhere one of these documentary programmes where a big fish, sliced open, is put on the table and eaten. Raw fish needs to be fresh to taste well, but this is being carried too far when fish are eaten alive. Here the fish flips and falls from the table, and have to be picked up and put on the plate again. What I see now is something everyone has heard about but which none has actually seen.

I went back to New Zealand in 1998 because my host sister Andy was marrying for the second time with John. They are a nice couple and are both a police. Years ago Mum had sent me a newspaper clipping which has a picture of Andy practising with a pistol. I did not know what birthday present to buy for them so my friend Megumi took me to a CD shop in Tokyo. After having a look around, I felt that I wanted to give the couple the music from the movie Titanic but I was not sure whether this would be acceptable as a wedding present, so I asked Megumi. She told me that it would be fine, so I chose the CD. She had many coupons collected from having bought many compact discs and she let me use some of them to buy the CD. The Titanic in real life may have been a catastrophe, but Titanic the movie is a story about love which conquers

everything. The story is a tragedy in the transcendental sense of the word.

My parents and my sisters joined me in Auckland from Thailand. They arrived one week later than I did. I flew from Tokyo to Auckland via Cairns in Australia. I arrived Auckland in the evening and sat waiting at the airport until it is light. Then I took a bus to town. It was fortunate that I had made myself a life membership of the Thailand Youth Hostel Association because here in New Zealand you get discounts on buses and accommodation with the card. While waiting for a bed at the Youth Hostel I walked and looked around the city. The city centre is very unlike the rest of the country but is likeable. It is a city proper and, later on in the day, filled with tourists. Nowhere in New Zealand can you find more currency exchange counters in a single street. The tourist information centre is next to a park but it was not yet open, so I carried on further before returning to it later. A few buildings close by were being renovated, and you needed to walk under one construction site to reach the tourist information centre. The coach station is close by and I decided that I would buy a ticket tomorrow morning to go to Christchurch. Then I walked back to the Youth Hostel to put my rucksack away. The place is easier to find when going from here. You only walk along the main road and then turn left to go steeply uphill towards it. Having settled down, I went again for a walk where I walked along the coast and through the university.

Even though New Zealand does not produce as many world famous figures as Scotland, among these few are some of the most sane and sound of characters, just for examples, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Sir Ernest Rutherford. The *Lord of the Rings* was filmed here, mainly in the South Island. Some of the loveliest walks in the world are here, to mention but a few the Milford and the Routeburn tracks. I had been on the former but not the latter. The milder of the Kiwi accent sounds similar to the accent of people from Kent. Some people say that many things here feel like England some decades ago, before it became crowded and ethnically diversified. The Maoris are healthy and nice. There is no problem between the descendants of the people who came from England and the local Maoris. In 1983 there were approximately six million people but about sixty million sheep in the country. Many of the farmers here are rich and own small aeroplanes and yachts.

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I stop over at Cairns on my way back to Japan. Cairns, which is a small town in Queensland, is one of the eight towns and cities which have an international airport, the rest of which are Adelaide in Southern Australia, Brisbane also in Queensland, Darwin in Northern Territory,

Hobart in Tasmania, Melbourne in Victoria, Perth in Western Australia, and Sydney in New South Wales. Here I stay at a Youth Hostel. My room has three double beds and a big window that faces the beach. The window has so low a sill that you could easily climb over on to the roof of the shade which covers the footpath in front of the hostel. Sitting on the sill you see a promenade, some coconut trees and then the beach. To the left not far away there is a market where there are some food stalls and souvenir shops.

There are not many things to do in Cairns apart from diving. But there is also an old railway line that winds its course up to the mountain, passing some spectacular spots. At one point it passes over the face of a waterfall and get splashes of water on your face if you stand at the window. Past the waterfall the train stops at a small station where you can get off and walk around the platform for a while. From there you get a nice view of the waterfall and the bridge. At the end of the line we come to a small town. There is one restaurant shaped like a big ship. I walk around and find a nice, small library. There is a shop that sells musical instruments of the aborigines. There is one instrument called the *dijeridu* which has the shape of a tube, some of which are very long.

To go to the Reef you usually depart from Cairns, though there are other towns for instance Bundaberg and Townsville. It takes more than two hours to go to the Reef from here. The Great Barrier Reef is a single structure made by living organisms which is around two million years old. After two and a half hours on the boat you are still completely surrounded by the Reef, and if you look at the horizon in the direction of the Pacific Ocean you could see a fine white line, barely perceptible, where the waves from the open ocean break against the boundary of the Reef, that is provided that you have a keen eyesight. For this I try to look but could see nothing, which is understandable for the fact that I never have on glasses that are properly prescribed. There are many activities to do, for example air tours, glass-bottomed boats, scuba diving, snorkelling, and reef walks whatever they are.

I buy a ticket to go snorkelling with a boat. On the boat we are told that we can try putting on the scuba mask and oxygen tank for ten minutes for free if we wish. Then after the period the trainer will sign to everyone to ask whether he wishes to go for a real dive. We only have to pay for the dive if we answer with a yes. I go along with four other passengers. At the end of the trial when everyone is asked whether he would like to do the actual diving, I am the last one to be asked. I do not know why I signalled back a yes, but it must be because everyone before me has agreed to carry on. I neither want to dive this far from the shore, nor do I like sharks.

We hold each other by the hand in string and dive about ten metres down until we reach the sand bottom. There are corals everywhere and fishes are mostly flat and colourful. We have not been diving for long before a shark comes. It is a black-tipped reef shark about seven feet long. It looks at us sidewise, then goes around us in half a circle and disappears. Soon it returns again to the spot where we first saw it and starts to go around us in the clockwise direction again, when the trainer points towards the bottom of the boat and signals to us to follow him. So our dive has been cut short because of the shark, but I feel that I have had enough dive and am glad to get up on the boat. After we have rested for a while, a net is dropped behind the boat and we get into the water and hold on to it at the same time that the boat begins to accelerate. After that brief but adventurous dive this is a great fun. There is a great deal of splashing and being knocked about by the wave, both of which are at the best at the tail end of the net.

There was a man with a video camera who dived with us. On our way back we watched the video that he took. I feel a little dizzy and keep my head on the table most of the time when I sit down. I decide to buy a copy of the video because there was the shark in it, and I say to myself that I will never dive again.

In the evening I go for a walk at the shopping mall at the pier, and there I decide to buy another tour for the next day, this time to go snorkelling in a sailing boat. The following morning we sail two and a half hour out to the Reef and snorkel where the corals come up to close just below the surface. After the first dive we have for lunch on board some very nice seafood. Unfortunately I feel a little seasick and can not eat much. I meet three Japanese girls who come together. Among the trainers there is a young man who comes from England and who has been here two years. He obtained all his diving certificates here while doing some part-time jobs at the same time. After lunch we sail to another spot to do more snorkelling. The water here looks very dark, I think because all around underneath us are corals. On the way back there is no wind, and so we turn on the motor and cruise slowly along. The weather has been cloudy since morning and we have had some light rain, but now it is perfect with the sun coming out. This has been another great day for me at the Reef.

In the evening I visit the three girls from Japan at their hotel which is a two-storey building and looks like a dormitory. It is a nice place. Most people who stay there has come a long way in their car. It has rained heavily in the evening before I set off to find the place. There are pools of water along the way and some of the roads are flooded. Because of the water I have to make several detours to avoid my feet getting wet,

but in the end, when there are no other ways and I have to wade in the flood, they get wet anyway. I knock at the door of their room a little past the appointed hour, sufficiently soaked and with my feet drenched in my shoes. We cook some food and eat, talking all the while; I am undressed and put into a bathrobe while one of the ladies iron my clothes and socks for me. With bare feet and kneeling on the thick carpet I spend a warm and memorable evening chatting with my new friends.

The European settlement here began in 1788, and the Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901. In has close to nineteen million people in 2000. As the total area is approximately 7.7 million square kilometres, this means that the average population density is 2.3 people in one square kilometre. More than seventy percent of the population are Christian, and more than fifteen percent are non religion. Of the rest of the world, China has the highest population while India, at nearly three hundred people to each square kilometre, the highest population density. Early immigrants to Australia mostly came from Britain and Ireland. Because of the need for workers, after the second World War there have been over half a million immigrants. Approximately one quarter of the population nowadays were born in non English speaking countries. Aborigines and Tores Strait islanders are the indigenous people. Since the 1970s more and more people with indigenous ancestry begin to identify themselves with the culture of their ancestors.

The weather here is hot because there are no high mountains. In the far north the climate is tropical with only two seasons, the wet and the dry seasons, similar to the Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia with tropical monsoons in the wet season. The highest rainfall is in Cairns and Darwin during January and February. The interior of the country is dry, and most people live in the temperate zone of the far east and far south. The temperature recorded minus 23°Cat Charlotte Pass, near Mount Kosciuszko, in 1994 and 53°Cin the northeast inland in 1889. Deserts for thirty-five percent of the land, some examples of which are the Great Victoria Desert in Western- and Southern Australia and the Great Sandy Desert in Western Australia.

The most familiar species of kangaroos are the red and grey kangaroos both of which grow up to two metres tall and can jump more than nine metres in one bound. Wallabies and wallaroos are smaller than these. Some of the other species of kangaroos live in trees. The tree kangaroos live on the treetops in the rainforest of New Guinea and north Queensland. There are also the rat kangaroos, about the size of rat.

Other animals include the bilby, the numbat, the Tasmanian Devil and the wombat. The dingo which arrived six thousand years ago is the only native dog. A fence six thousand kilometres long extends from

the Great Australian Bight to Darling Downs in Queensland to keep dingoes off livestock. Some of the birds are the bell bird, cockatoo, emu, finch, galah, jabiru or black-necked stork, kookaburra, lyre-bird, parrot, rainbow lorikeet and rosella. The Bogong moths, which used to be eaten by the Aboriginal people, migrate each year and swarm the Parliament House in Canberra which lies on their route. The golden bell frog is an endangered species and has at one time disrupted the construction of the site for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, and at another a multi storey car-park, which was subsequently turned into ponds specially built to preserve the frog colony.

In 1994 the prime minister of the U.K., John Major, reintroduced an old word *yobs* through the media to describe youths with troublesome attitude, but here in Australia the word *yobbo* is always used to describe uncultured young men or those who drink too much beer. In 1983 when I did my sixth form in New Zealand a university is called a *varsity*. Here, as well as in England, it is called a *uni*. Words like sneakers and spud have the same meaning as they do in England, but are used more often in both Australia and New Zealand. But some words here have a very different meaning, for example *spunk* here means an attractive person where as in British English it means semen or courage; likewise spunky here means sexy while over there it means plucky or spirited; also *togs* here is used for a swimsuit. Some of the words you can only find here, for example *barbie* for barbecue, *chook* for chicken, *daks* for pants, *dunny* for the loo, *esky* for an ice chest for beer, *midi* for a medium sized glass to serve beer in in pubs, and *to shout* here sometimes mean to take your turn to pay. Also there are shortened words like *mozzie* from *mosquito*, *onya* from *good on you*, *ooroo* from *see you later*, *rellie* from *relative*, and the doubly unique *roo* for kangaroo. *QANTAS* is no exception word in English but is an acronym for the Queensland and Northern Territory Air Services.

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It's 2000 and I come to live in England again for the third time. I arrive in London in the evening, spend the night sitting and sleeping sitting inside the airport waiting to catch a coach in the morning to go to Manchester where I am going to study. When morning comes I buy myself a coach card which will last for one year during the time of which it will give me some discount whenever I buy a ticket. Anyway it turns out in the end to be expensive because I hardly buy any ticket during the whole year. I enjoy travelling, especially in the day time since I like looking at the scenery, but I never trust the vehicles. I am always filled with imagination when look out of the window on my way somewhere. Highways always keep their feet on the ground. They bear the heaviest

traffic and therefore it seems sensible enough that engineers always have other roads go over them. 'Why cars?', I wonder to myself, 'The fossil fuel is running out, then why more cars?' We travel along the M40 to Birmingham, or B'ham as the signs on the road says. I change to another coach at Birmingham to go to Manchester.

In Manchester I stay at the Grosvenor Place, which is a hall of residence of both the University of Manchester and UMIST. I can hardly recognise the old Manchester that I used to know as it is now twice as busy and much more crowded. I am going to study Language Engineering and Peter is going to be my supervisor. I have something that I want to do in my mind, but Peter wants me to change to another topic which he can supervise better and that is quite all right with me.

We live in a cosy flat where there are thirteen people. Chalyvopoulos is sometimes a little obsess. He sticks up an obscene picture on the outside of the door of his room. I stays there for a week until one elderly cleaning lady becomes so fed up with it and tears it off. Deepak's ambition is to sleep with an English girl on his upcoming birthday. Dirk is well travelled and had lived in New Zealand for more than one year. Aziz's unspoiled soul loves all breathing creatures on Earth.

But apart from these people, we are in effect a China Town. Chloe and Kai, who live together, have friends to dinner every week. Michael's room always have three people sleeping in, though he only pays for one. Two more friends of his come to dinner every other day, one among whom refuses to talk with most people in our flat. We have only one cooker with four hobs on top, and we have two separate Chinese groups of people who constantly have big dining companies. On the other hand there is one lawyer, also from China, who is secludes himself such that I have never talked with him until two months afterwards.

I am volunteering again for the Community Action. We have a day care project where we bring elderly people together every Wednesday afternoon at the Main Building to have some tea and talk. The leader of this project is John who is quite ambitious and who later becomes the first controversial president of the UMIST Student Union. When this happens he moves upstairs to the president's office, and I refer to him as *John upstairs* to distinguish from *John downstairs* who is the manager of the Community Action.

Among the elderly people whom I have met back in 1995, Mary died three years ago, and Dolly two. Clare has moved from her home in Gorton to an elderly home and, with her positive attitude to life, still looks well despite her age which has exceed ninety. I have not met her, but her grand daughter has sent me a picture from her birthday. Annie's birthday is in October, but nobody invites me to come along. She is only

ninety.

Retirement pension in the U.K. generally comes in two parts, basic- and over 80 pensions. The first one is about £50 and the second one about £40. If you are over 80, you may have 25p added to your basic pension. Why this 25p is there I do not know. You can hardly buy anything with that amount of money, except a pint of milk perhaps.

Manchester was first built in 79AD as a fort by a Roman general Julius Agricola. The Roman called it Mamucium which means *breast shaped hill* for the fort rested on a sandstone ridge of that shape. It was meant to be a communications post between Deva and Eboracum, now Chester and York respectively. The ruin that can be seen nowadays is the remains of the fourth fort, built from stone quarried at Collyhurst two miles away. The first fort was built in timber with soil walls. The final fort was built around 200AD in stone. It used to house around one thousand soldiers at one time. Outside the Fort was the Vicus where families of the soldiers and the local tribe of Brigantes lived. There was a granary where grain was ground using quern stones to make flour for coarse bread. The Romans left Mamucium in 410AD. During the Industrial Revolution Castlefield became an important site, but the remains of the castle in the field was destroyed when the canals and railways were built. The highway which cuts through the centre of the city from east to west has as its name a play upon the name of the Roman town. It is called the *Mancunion.*

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Kai and Cloe are among my flat mates. Kai often works as a waiter through the catering company Gilds. He says it's good money and that I should come along and join. So I sign up and get my first job working in a bar at the Manchester City Stadium during a football match. I learn how to operate the till. It is difficult to memorise the prices of all the food, snacks and drinks. After work it is already getting dark and I walk back to Grosvenor Place via Rusholme.

The company is owned by two men, one British and the other Pakistani. They do try every way possible to get get most out of us. We are made to buy trousers from them.

One day we go together in a bus to Liverpool to work at Anfield for a football match. One staff from Gilds who take us there is an African woman. Before we leave on the bus, Michael calls her a Negro when he talks to me, and I think that she must have overheard it. The word *Negro* is not derogative in Thai and I think it may not be so in Chinese either. But I know that it is offensive in English to call someone a Negro, but Michael might not know. After we arrive at Anfield that woman tries her best to leave all Asians who come on the bus with nothing to do. She makes a great effort in asking around whether we can speak good

English. Then she ask everyone who can understand English to raise his hand, and most people do though think it an imbecile question to ask as everyone here would have already been interviewed at the time when he signed on at the company. Then she drives all the Aseans back to sit and wait in the bus while the rest work at the stadium. Later she twisted the story by saying that she did ask, 'Who can't understand English?', and certainly enough those people who raised their hands in answer to the question, which was asked in English however poor at that, did so because they did not understand the language. I am among those who supposedly have to sit on the bus for half a day with nothing to do, except that I tell the driver that I will go for a walk and then I walk into town. I walk along streets lined with shops and on the way back I look at the piers on the River Mersey. The river is so wide at this point where it soon joins the sea that it looks more like a gulf than a river. In fact it is what they call a firth in Scotland.

I lost my way a few times and have to ask my way. But in the end I reach a park on the other side of which is the stadium. Walking across the ground there and along the path through the park is enjoyable, as there are very few people around and you could hear the humming sound of the crowd cheering from inside inside the stadium. A few kids are playing at the spring and garden there.

Back in Manchester we go to the Manchester United stadium where we will work during the night. I decide not to work here but go back with the bus. So except my pleasant walk in Liverpool, I have done nothing today apart from sitting on the bus.

Back in our flat Cloe who did not join us to Liverpool are angry for the unfair treatment Kai and us have been through. She write a letter which I agree to bring to the manager of Gilds in person. The name of one of the managers is also Aziz, the same as that of one of our flat mates. He repeats the lie that that woman made by replacing 'can' with 'can't', and then carelessly brush the matter aside saying he will investigate and get back to us. The matter seems likely to me to be going on forever without success, which is not what I want. Neither do I want to give them our address, as you would never want to give away the address of your friends when you complain who are also involved with the complaint you make. So when I see that he is going to brush the matter under the carpet, I tell him that this is a serious matter for, 'It is about racism,' I say. The word *racism* has a special effect on people in England to whom it works almost like a charm. It is good to think that people will treat you better if only not to be called a racist by you. Aziz tells one of his staffs there to drive me to the other office where we signed on for our jobs, to talk with his partner whom he says is in charge of that office. After reading the

letter, which he has obviously known all the contents from his partner Aziz over the phone while we were on the road, he says everyone deprived of his rightful work will get the full pay for the day even though he has done nothing. What is more, according to what he says we would have been paid the money anyway even if we had not written the letter. The fear of being called a racist here is really a magic!

Back in my flat, both Cloe and Kai are surprised when I tell them about the result and the success of our complaint. I never let anyone know how I did it. I had better stop at that lest it goes unchecked and I be responsible for spreading the magic word around.

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I go to London by train to attend the launching ceremony of the Year of Volunteering in U.K. which is this year. I can get off and on the train any time along the way, so I get off at Chesterfield. A few days ago I asked at the Tourist Information Office in Manchester about interesting places to visit on my way and have been told that there are Roman remains in Chesterfield. I find out here that the staff has mistaken Chesterfield for Chester and I could not see any Roman fortress here. Chesterfield, however, is a nice town which is known for its landmark church with its crooked spire. The spire was made from wooden planks which had not been tempered and therefore had shrunken, and in so doing distorted out of shape. Like the Italian leaning tower at Pisa, the spire becomes more and more crooked each year. Some day when it gets too dangerously crooked there will be works done to freeze it in time such that to make it crooked just right, the same way as had been done with the leaning tower. In other words, you don't want to put things aright no matter how abnormal they may be so long as they are unique.

The Crooked Spire of St. Mary and All Saints Church leans at 9 feet 5 inches from its true centre. It is 228 feet high. The church was dedicated in 1234. The open-air Chesterfield Market has over 250 stalls. Every Thursday there is a flea market, and car boot sale every Sunday.

I walk around Chesterfield trying to find Roman remains, but could find them nowhere. Instead I find a market and close to it a Tourist Information. So I get myself some brochures, and upon being asked about Roman remains in Chesterfield a staff at the office says, 'There's no Roman remains here. It must be Chester you want. This is Chesterfield.'

'Where is Chester?', I ask, 'Have I passed it on my way here? I came from Manchester and I'm going to London, you see. But I would like to stop to have a look at interesting places along the way. I have been told that Chesterfield is very famous for its Roman remains.'

'Who told you that? You must have confused Chesterfield with Chester,' that gentleman says.

'Do I also pass Chester on the train going from Manchester to London?', I ask.

'No. Chester is in another direction. It's not this way,' then, 'You won't pass it on your train if you are going to London.'

I start to protest, 'I was in Manchester yesterday, and I asked at Tourist Information there. I told them that I was going to London by train but would like to stop somewhere along my way. I asked them whether they knew of some places interesting that I could visit. And one of the staffs there said that I could stop at Chesterfield and have a look at Roman remains.'

'Oh, no!', that gentleman says, this time with a smile. Then he turns towards a colleague of his and says laughingly to that lady, 'We've already sent them all the brochures and they still did this.'

So I come to the street laughing within and smiling. One problem solved, the reason why I could not find the Roman remains is that there is none here. No wonder all the people on the street whom I asked earlier on the hill had a puzzled look on their face, and no two of them gave the same direction though, and this is puzzling, each of them suggested me a direction anyway.

But the Romans must have been here too, because I did see at one place beside the road a ground that is fenced off with a sign which says, 'Excavation site'. I remember the sign also says something about the Romans, but that excavation site was very small.

Without a Roman remains to look for, I suddenly find that I have plenty of time. So after walking briefly through the market in the open, I visit the Museum. The Chesterfield Museum and Art Gallery is nice and small. The Gallery contains works by Joseph Syddall (1864–1942) who lived in Old Whittington. His paintings are in the style of the Impressionists, but his pencil drawings are more real-life's. It would be difficult to make an impressionistic pencil drawing. Our mind can only play with colours to produce impressionistic effects.

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I have arranged to meet with Met and Bill at a station close to their home in St. Albans. I call Met from a public telephone the station, and they come to pick me up soon afterwards. Bill come in his new state car. The last time I was at their place Bill drove a Ford Scorpio, but now he has many cars.

We pick up another car along our way and then go to his garage. I sit with Met in her car while Bill comes separately in his. At the garage I help him put some glass panes into the state car. The glass is so big that he has to lower the backs of all the back seats to make rooms for them. He tries to put one of the cars into the garage, but it is too wide so it

would not fit in. In the end he is disappointed because he has to leave it outside.

I have a bottle of wine with me. Though it is only a table wine, it tastes very nice. I like most table wines. Sometimes I think they tastes as good as expensive Appellation wines, but then again I would not have known what a very expensive wine tastes like. The opposite is true with country wines. These latter I can never drink. To me they taste like pungent alcohol.

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The launch celebration of student community action week 2001 is held at one of the committee rooms situated in the committee corridor within the House of Lords. Student Volunteering UK whose patron and directors is Lord Redesdale, organise the event. The theme for the events in the coming week is, 'Do it, love it, shout it'. There is also a conference in Liverpool at the end of the week from 23rd to 25th February.

We stay at Travel Inn which is located in a building block called London County Hall. It is on the south bank of the Thames River and behind the London Eye. On Sunday 18th February I arrive London by train and visit the British Museum. I see among other things there the Mycenean clay tablets written in Linear B script which is an ancient writing of Greek and was deciphered by Michael Ventris. Not long ago I had read a book about his decipherment, and now when I am here at the British Museum I know exactly what I want to see. There are few tablets on display, and they are very small, about two by five inches. The writings are syllabic, which means that each symbol represents a consonant and a vowel, a unit generally called morpheme. The famous Rosetta Stone is there, but to me these small clay tablets fascinate me more. Because they are syllabic like the Gana's of the Japanese language, and because Greek is closely related to Sanskrit and Pali in India, they show the link between Asian and European cultures.

There is a ceremonial bronze dirk on display which dates to 1400–1300 BC, and an Anglo-Saxon sword in its rusted self and a shiny reproduction of it. There is also a drinking horn salvaged from a ship burial site near Sutton, and a spear head from Kiev. I make a sketch of the dress of the Eskimos called the *igloolik*. The British Library used to be here at the British Museum, but has now moved to its present location at St. Pancras.

From British Museum I walk to the accommodation. In the evening we meet in a pub at the Travel Inn. Anant has lost all his money in the slot machine there and starts to ask for pound coins from people around. Andrew gives him one, and he lose it again in no time. I do not think Andrew will get his money back, neither do I think he likes his friend

much thereafter.

There is only drinking after this, so I retire to my room. I have a shower and then go out for a walk. I walk along the bank of the river Thames, take a stroll in the Waterloo station, cross the Waterloo Bridge, then walk back along the opposite bank and cross over again on the Westminster Bridge.

Almost every museum in England has an Egypt collection. There are so many mummies and mummy cases here that one can not help but worry whether there is still any left in Egypt. The British Museum in particular has a very large collection of these. Huge stones and parts of buildings or temples have somehow been transported here. It is difficult to imagine what on Earth had made people carry these kinds of things over here. The Manchester Museum also has quite a good collection from Egypt. Archaeologists at the University of Manchester manually reconstruct the countenance of mummies at the time when they were alive. The Ancient Egyptian collection at the West Park Museum in Macclesfield came from the three visits to Egypt made by Marianne Brocklehurst towards the end of the 19^{th} century.

My room is number 252. It costs Student Volunteering UK around £70 a night for me to stay here. There is no keys for the room, but you insert your key card in a slot to open the door. Outside the hotel, the ticket office for the London Eye is to the left and then left again.

Jess, Rachel, Zoe and I take the Community Action's minibus to Liverpool for the conference. Jess is driving. All of us have been excited about it for weeks. Jess drives so well that it is next to no time before we arrive in Liverpool. However, it takes us the same amount of time driving around Liverpool trying to find the Adelphi Hotel. Finally we find the Hotel, and Jess parks the minibus in the parking ground of the hotel before we walk to the hotel.

I find to my surprise that people here seem to be sensitive against races, seemingly more so that people in Manchester. The staffs at the reception ignore me until I am the last one to be shown to my room. But like a compensation for that, I find to my surprise again that Student Volunteering UK has booked a spacious suite for me. I am alone in my room whereas the girls have to stay together in one room.

This is probably because of the nature of the courses which each of us has chosen. All the courses I have chosen are about how to organise your own volunteering group from scratch, while the others have chosen practically only courses about practical works of volunteers. Therefore I am treated as managers of a group while my friends are being treated as volunteers.

Zoē has sent me a draft of her book 'Make volunteering count' and

asked my opinion of it. She is among the organisers of this conference, so I could have a word with her about the book briefly when she is free. I told her that I liked the part on how to behave in an interview. But the title is too long, I prefer a terse name, for instance, 'Volunteering Counts' which, for one thing, reflects your conviction. Also, I think that the back cover should be more attractive and the book should be serious without being serious. 'Don't underestimate volunteering,' I would say somewhere in my book if I were to write one. But Zoē later gives her book a new name, *the art of crazy paving.*

There are so many volunteer groups in the U.K. There is one Crusaders Union in St. Albans, Hertfordshire where Bill and Met live, though I don't really know what it does. Some of the names are more straight forward, for example Scout Association or National Council of Hindu Temples. There are organisations for deafblinds and there is another one for the abolition of vivisection.

For the year 2000 and 2001 I am one of the committee of the Community Action at UMIST. I also sit as a student representative on both our university's Library Sub-committee and also our Postgraduate Study Committee. I usually have something to offer at a meeting, though most of the time none of what I have suggested is carried out.

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Rusholme begins where Oxford Road ends. In 1995 the area was so deserted that you would surely be mugged if you walked there after dark. Now it is bustling like Soho well past midnight everyday. All the shops and restaurants here were not there back then. Large restaurants here makes around £20,000 a week, whereas smaller ones could probably make half of that. Here, as in everywhere else, you can find kebabs. Shish kebab dates a thousand years or more to the traditional nomadic food in Anatolia. In Turkish, *shish* means *skewer* and *kebab* means *roasted.*

Manchester in the 18th century was like Chester or York, a compact market town. Then came the industrial revolution which made the population during the fifty years of the mid-19th century double every decade. The grains of the city became coarser as row upon row of Victorian town houses filled in the space. After the Wars these grains shrunk or disappeared like plant cells devoid of sap. The wholesome structure disintegrated into clusters of grains. Both these islands of grains and the void in between them became unsafe. Prestigious areas like Gorton turned into a dangerous area while lovable and peaceful residential areas like Moss Side became infested with gangs and murders.

Funding from the European Union has helped the North West since 1994. The fund splits into two main strands, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. After the reform of the

European Structural Funds in 1989, regional actions of the Union were reinforced. Those who have benefited so far are the World of Glass in St. Helens, the new home of the Hallé the Bridgewater Hall, the heritage railway line the East Lancashire Railway, the Lowry on Salford Quays, the Globe Centre, the Tate Gallery in Liverpool, the Blue Planet Aquarium in Ellesmere Port, Greater Manchester's Metrolink, Middlebrook and its Reebok Stadium, the Imperial War Museum and Liverpool Airport's expansion.

Platt Field has a big park with a lake where there are boats and an island in the middle, and plenty of water birds. Five years ago you would not have felt safe in a park, but now all parks feel like a bazaar. There is at the Platt Hall here a gallery of costume which has been a part of Manchester City Art Galleries since 1947. The final plans of the hall was designed by Timothy Lightoler in 1762. In early twelfth century the Platt estate belonged to the monastic order of the Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem who in 1190 gave it to Richard de la More whose descendants changed their name to Platt in the thirteenth century. It was sold to Raphe Worsley in 1625, and John Carill Worsley commissioned William Jupp in 1760, John Carr in 1761, and finally Timothy Lightoler in 1762 to design a new Platt Hall to replace the old one which was built in timber. The building looks from the outside like a big box but the staircase inside is exquisite. Blouses in 1907 shows bloated shoulders while those in 1917 have their shoulders plain. Doublets for men were popular during 1625–35, while for women it was stays during 1775–1800 and bloomers during 1896–1900. Textiles industries in Manchester started in mid-eighteenth century.

§

There are always job presentations in Manchester. I always go along whenever I know there is one and if I have the time. When I was here in 1994 I was very poor and these presentations represented free food. At the time when I lived there the Moberly Hall was still catered and you had two meals a day, breakfast and dinner. I always saved some of the breakfasts for lunches, usually an apple or an orange and some cookies. Asim did that too. But that was not quite enough for us, so whenever there was a presentation by a company we went along and considered it a feast. They did not mind because we listened to their presentation and we behave in our eating and never drank too much. Asim could not drink, he is a Muslim. But sometimes in a party when Ken and I saw him drinking something which we knew had got alcohol in it and we told him in earnest he seemed rather disappointed. He could enjoy the drink so long as no one announced about its alcoholic contents. After that we knew and the three of us tried to forget he was a Muslim.

BP used to stand for *British Petroleum* but has now become *Beyond Petroleum.* Gas companies have in effect divided into two groups, one sticking to the oil industry, the other trying to get away from it or at least to make people think they do. Shell is among the first group. I went to their presentation and at the end just before they let us go to the food one woman who had been sitting in the front row stood up and spoke to us. She told us not to work for Shell, that the company was a murderer, that the following week there would be a conference organised by wind energy companies somewhere and she could give the detail about it to anyone who would be interested in going. She said that it would be better to work for those companies than to work for Shell. Shell was shocked. Their representative said that they also have the wind energy. They sure have a wind energy section, but I think it is only for show because I went to another presentation by them and when I told them that I would like to apply to that section they discouraged me by saying that I would not be successful if I applied there. So I think that Shell is going to squeeze the last drop of oil from the earth and let all their oil field run dry long before they would start thinking about any renewable energy.

Back at the presentation we left off, there was also a man who came with that woman who spoke up against Shell. So there were at least two activists there. While we were eating they stayed around and talked to the students who were there and then to the presenters because the latter came and talked to them. I think they were asked to leave and they did. Not long afterwards all the light went off, there was a fire alarm, the security staffs of the Moberly Hall came in and everybody had to leave the building. I flew along with the outgoing students. I noticed at the bottom of the stairs on the ground floor that the glass covering a fire alarm button was broken, so I pointed it out to the security guards. About five minutes afterward we were upstairs and eating again.

Powergen has raised wind turbines to form a wind farm off the shore near Blyth in Northumberland. There is also the St. Breock wind farm in Cornwall. In 1998 British Petroleum merged with Amoco, Atlantic Richfield or ARCO, Burmah Castrol, and Vastar. After discussions they decided that the new company thus created should still be called 'BP', only now the full name has changed to the name already mentioned to be in accord with the change in the strategy. It turns out the be a good abbreviation which could stand for many thing from big picture to better products. Power companies from now on will have to strive towards renewable and environmental friendly energies to be successful.

The career service of both the University of Manchester and UMIST makes pamphlets of information about jobs and career fairs. One such

publication is called Career Wise and is updated I think every month. Here it says, a company called Ding Ding Dang gives a salary of 1,000 pounds sterling per month for teaching English full-time in South Korea. The job only require a sense of humour and the ability to teach children. A salary of 1,000 pounds per month is not that bad, though it looks so at first because companies here always give an annual, not a monthly salary.

§

Monday 7^{th} May 2001 was the date I flew to Italy. In the morning I make many pizzas to bring with me on the trip. Then I have to telephone Natwest about my Switch card, which I think was lost. Through some negligence, a teller girl at the bank forgot to give me back my card on Friday afternoon. I did not know where the card was, so I telephoned the card lost centre to have it cancelled. They said they would send a new card to my home at Grosvenor Place within a week. But since I am going to be away in Italy for ten days, I want to make sure the card is sent to the bank instead. The porter of Grosvenor Place, seeing that it is about a lost cash card, lets me use the telephone at the reception to call the bank.

I fly in a British Midland plane to Heathrow first, and from there on another plane to Rome. *La traversata della linea del cambiamento di data fu magnifica.* The view from the plane is magnificent. At one point, the view of Mont Blanc to the left of the plane is beautiful. The peak of that mountain seems so close to us. It is white, of course, as it is named a 'white mountain'. As we fly over the Alps the light gradually dies down. The light of the setting sun puts shadow on the geological features below and makes contours of the ground stand out. It is a fantastic sight to watch. We virtually fly into the night. There is a unique line that divides the light from the dark and, once we fly pass that line, everything around us suddenly becomes dark. The sunset when seen from thousands of feet above the ground is quite a memorable sight to watch. The strange thing is that the atmosphere of the mountains below reaches up to where we are, and I feel the solitude of the night as though I were down there amid the forests.

Reaching Rome at night I watch fellow passengers go home, and then spend the night at the airport walking around, sit writing my travel log, or sleeping. I brought with me an Italian dictionary that I borrowed from the Central Library in Manchester. With this I try to record something in Italian. But it is a very tedious job, so I give up after half a page. It is good to be able to let sleep shut your weary eyes, even when you have no bed to lie in.

The following day I catch a bus into Rome. There, following the di-

rection I received from the Youth Hostel in Manchester, I change into another bus to go to the youth hostel where I am going to stay. At the hostel there is a big locker for everyone to put all his belongings in. But you need to bring your own lock and key, of which I have not thought about and therefore have not brought with me. I decide to carry my rucksack with me all day since I have heard so much about stealing in here.

First I catch a bus to Vatican. There is a gate where all the cars go in. People always go there and have to be told that it is not open to the public. I have done that too, and have been told that I should go to the Vatican museum instead. I leave my rucksack with the security at the reception. When I leave the museum at the closing time in the afternoon I saw a Japanese girl talking with the security staffs. Some of her things seems to be missing. The ceiling of the Sistine Chapel has been cleaned some years ago and looks better than the pictures in the book I have at home. The frescoes by Michelangelo seem to become alive as they take on a fresh look. Not only this, but the whole museum and its collections are invaluable. I head for the Sistine Chapel first, and stay there until it is closed. Then I wander around the museum until it in turn is closed.

In the Art History class at Ashburton College I learnt about Raphael's *The School of Athens* and Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. My dream comes true when I can look at it with my own eyes. The frescoes of Raphael was commissioned by Julius II while those of Michelangelo by Sixtus IV. Also at the Museum of Vatican is a tapestry in the picture of an elephant with a huge mouth, made by the school *Nuevela Scola* of Raphael, which does not looks very realistic. This is I think because there is no elephants in Italy.

Houses and buildings here in Rome can be very colourful. After the museum I walk around. I walk past a narrow lane where there are two buildings of different colours facing each other on the opposite sides of the street, one old rose while the other orange. The orange-coloured house shines from the light reflected off the old-rose coloured one. At Flaminiol two roads, both of which are two-way, come so close together that they nearly touch, leaving a gap of about one metre in between. Along Travere near Castela Sangelico there are tall trees, fifteen metres or so, whose leaves look so green and transparent.

The currency here is the Lire whose symbol is the same as the pound Stirling. I am frequently frightened by the price of food written in supermarkets. One book may cost 30 grand!

The bus number 32 goes from Ottavian to the Youth Hostel where I stay. I have a strong camera box with me which I use for sitting upon. When I sit on it I would be in a position lower than the line of sight,

which makes me able to observe what is going on around me. At the Ottavian stop I sit on my box and watch a gang of three or possibly four people communicating with one another in secret gestures. I think they are pickpocketers. I did not notice that they were together until I secretly observe them from the low position that I sit. On the surface they seem to be strangers. One of them must have gotten tired in his legs from standing waiting for a prey. He got on a tram number 19 and come back in it again after a while.

At the hostel I met a guy from Holland who said his name was Paul, but who spoke Italian. He is a little bit queer, which makes me think about Amsterdam and wonder whether it is a gay paradise.

I see someone wearing a sunglass that clips on to normal glasses, but hangs down on the inside of them instead of on the outside as clip-ons normally do, so that the shape of your glasses is not hidden behind the sunglass. The glass is in one piece, and curves around on both sides of your eyes like goggles you use in laboratories.

A train ticket to go to Pisa costs around 30 grand, which is less than half of the price of the ticket going to Venice, so I make up my mind that I would go to Pisa. The journey starts from Roma Termini, passing Cecina, the sea, through a tunnel, the sea again, and then Livorno Centrale and finally Pisa Centrale. Along the way I see a big heifer with long horns curved outward so that it must be over one and a half metres from one tip to another.

Here in Pisa everything leans. Both the Tower and another cylindrical structure along Piazza del Duomo lean southwards. From Pisa Centrale station I walk across the river Arno and then turn left passing the Scuola Normale Superiore on the Piazza dei Cavalieri towards to tower which, together with several other structures, is on a large patch of ground with soft grass you could roll on. The Tower is being girdled and pulled with steel cables while works are carried out in the ground underneath it to stop it from leaning further. There are signs which say that it is closed to the public for the moment; the word closed in Italian is chiuso. More than a month later I read in a newspaper in Manchester that the garter around the tower is going to be removed a few weeks later. In November tourists will again be able to go up to the top.

The tower has been built in three stages; in the 12^{th}, 13^{th} and 14^{th} centuries respectively. Soon after the work began it was realised that the tower was leaning. At each stage of the construction engineers always built the new portion upright. But as the tower gradually tilts more and more each year, these current verticals result in three different inclinations in different parts of the tower, to the effect that nowadays it is curved in three steps.

The number four on clocks is interesting in that sometimes it is written IIII and sometimes IV. At Forum in Rome the former is the case while at Basilique Notre-Dame in Nice the latter.

I get on a train to go overnight towards Nice. It passes Ventimiglia, Menton, Monaco Monte-Carlo which is a neat station underground with announcements in French, and then Beaulieu sur Mer. The train passes innumerable tunnels and coves along the coast.

§

There is a spot in Nice where I like to sit and eat. It is to the east of the beach, high up on a cliff but just off the road side. It overlooks a sun-bathing place on huge rectangular concrete cubes which are placed just off the rock face. These cubes rest on flat surfaces made by paving concrete on rocks. They stand over six foot tall and placed beside one another with a gap in between Between these cubes and the rocks and sea there is a shower tap. Below the rocks there is the sea surrounded by a cove and there are some corals which appear as dark patterns on the seabeds when looked at from above. Today there is someone swimming about down there wearing a snorkel and long flippers.

My last and only night in Nice I meet one American who says that he is from San Francisco or was it L. A., I can not remember. He suggests that we find somewhere to stay the night outside together waiting for our trains. He says he always stay at friends' places wherever he goes. He finds it cheaper that way when you travel. Obviously he does not know anyone in Nice because he is homeless like me. We are at the train station, and I noticed a sign which says that the station will be closed after midnight. I sit down on my camera box and use a bench as a dining table. He comes and sit close by and starts to a conversation. After a while he lies down on the floor while I, still sitting on my box, embrace my rucksack in front of me and rest my head on the bench. Less than fifteen minutes later, the security guard comes and tells us to leave because he is going to shut the station for five hours.

We walk along together and I suggest that we go to sit and wait on the benches by the seaside. But when we pass a park my companion suggests we sleep in there. The park must be the size of a football ground. It has no fences, so we enter and soon find ourselves a spot among coconut trees. We lay ourselves down on his sleeping bag which is spread out and used as a mat. The rustling sound of the leaves above our heads reminds me of other nights in my life with a similar sound. I always remember this sound in the tranquility of the night well.

Anyway, I do not know if I could trust this man who talks so well, in fact a little too much, and whose talk of which is, whether intentionally or not, too readily agree with mine. So just before I am lulled by his

monotonously soft talks into sleep, I make up my mind and tell him that I will walk to the seaside. I get up and walk away. I am not sure if it is safe on your trip to fall asleep when your are alone beside someone whom you have just met. Being a traveller, he seems to know too well quiet spots to sleep at night in this town.

I walk on until I reach the seaside, then sit down on a bench under the moon and among the sound of waves receding from the gravel beach. The moon is almost round. A few people pass by on their roller-blades, bicycles, or motorcycles. There are also some lone strollers and a few couples. Most of these people are tourists. A few of them are somewhat dubious. I have managed to get some sleep after three. It gets colder and between four and five o'clock it gets so cold I can not stand sitting down. I can not bring myself to sit down. I am wearing a leather jacket but have only one pair of thin trousers on. When it is ten to five, I start off and head for the station. It is good to be walking again. At least now I know where I am going.

The streets are absolutely still. It is still very early and I hardly see anybody. It must have been the cold breeze; I can not wait until I reach the station to go to the toilet, so I branch off to the right at one point to a quiet road and there relieve my bladder at a tree. I walked past the park where I left John lying the last time I saw him, but decide that I don't want to know if he is still there. From what he said he must have left on a train at five, except that there is no trains leaving at five as far as I know. I buy myself a cup of cappuccino from a vending machine before getting on the train.

§ **Vienna**

Here I sit opposite to the monument of Beethoven thinking what to do next. I fall asleep for perhaps five or ten minutes, and when I wake up it is still late afternoon and the sun is shining but it feels chilly. I decide to walk to a park east of the town where the trees form straight lines which intersect one another. On my way there I stop at a drinking fountain and here change my socks. The place is a small opening at a junction among some residential buildings. Suddenly a loud music comes from one of the flats high up and there are voices of people deliberately talking loudly. There are flashes of flashlight once or twice. People around here may do this on a usual basis when some homeless people stops here for rest.

It is already past the closing hour as written at the gate when I arrive at Augarten. But seeing a girl with her two big dogs jogged past me into the park, I follow close behind her heel. The park is not to be closed until nearly half an hour afterwards. There are children playing some game with a bat. In the park there are two towers as black as the Two Towers of Tolkien. Trees are huge here and straight lines they form are

very straight. In a few places there is an abrupt break in the wall of trees which allows you to look through to the otherwise hidden glades behind. Some of these openings look nice and comfortably breezy inside.

The evening is nice. It is getting dark now. In the end I sit down at a place not far from the gate waiting for the park to close. The park staffs come along in a car and announce to tell everyone to leave. From the park I walk back along a different route. When outside the park, I turn right and walk along in that direction. A store at a petrol station tries to make me pay more for a fruit juice than the price written. I manage to pay only the usual price, but I in fact should not have bought anything from them at all.

Along the Donaukanal there are food stalls and restaurants with things for people to play, for instance shooting, trampoline or whatever the canvas thing that you bounce on top is called, and beach volley-ball. I sit and watch the traffic light for a while. Then I carry on along and walk down to the bank of the canal where there is a boat and people partying in it. I sit there watching the boat while eating some food from the can. After that I walk back up to the street level. Then I walk along to the gas station where I had bought milk the previous night, which opens 24 hours, and there buy another milk.

Austria is very french. The further westwards you go the more German it becomes. Therefore Salzburg feels more German than does Vienna. I noticed the nature of copper-sheeted roofs for the first time while climbing up the hill in Salzburg. Salzburg is surrounded by mountains while Brennero is inside them. It is like a border town lived by some hill tribes.

Normally you would walk to the further carriages because you think they would be empty. People usually think that all the first few carriages are always the first ones to be filled up. Everyone must have been thinking this way and I finally find an empty compartment in the first carriage, but not before having exhausted all the other carriages first. The compartment has six seats, with seats facing one another in pairs to form two rows. If you pull out the seat and press down the back rest you get half a bed. Do the same thing to the rest and you get three beds.

Similar to Japanese, words in Italian always end with a vowel. But unlike the former, they never end with a 'u'.

§

Translation can never be the same as the original. At a synagogue here in Florence the written explanation in Italian says that the centre dome is made of sheet copper which has the characteristic green colour while the English version says something similar, except that instead of the colour green being characteristic to copper it says the copper has turned green. Both synagogue and ghetto are religious places. The only

difference is that a synagogue is built for the purpose but a ghetto is incorporated into a dwelling.

I walk up to the Michelangelo Platz. There are several groups of tourists from Japan. I sit down under the sculpture by Michelangelo eating a can of Celi in brine. After I have finished eating it I sit there absorbing the atmosphere around me and look at the view of Florence from afar. From this distance the town looks all red and pale orange, a lovely sight to watch. I always like warm colours. The walk uphill to get to this place has been exhausting with my rucksack and all.

The groups of tourists came in coaches. They stay for half and hour before being picked up by the coach again to go to some other places. Two Japanese girls run towards her coach following another in black who says, 'Mou ozokatta. Minasan hayakatta,' which means that they are already late and everyone else was so quick. Their guide has already been walking around a while ago to tell everyone to go back to the coach. One of the girls drops something which looks like a piece of paper from where I sit. 'It could well be a bank note,' I think. It takes me a while to gather up my belongings and walk to the point. Meanwhile a group of some women and a man walk pass that point. The man seems to have noticed the piece of paper on the floor but had done nothing with it. It turns out to be two banknotes of 10,000 Lire each when I finally get there. I quickly pick them up and walk to the coach which still has hot left the spot. I am sure I can reach them before they leave and give the money back to the girl. But when I reach the coach it turns out to be not only one coach but three, all of which seem to be of different groups. One coach has just left when I arrived and I could see neither the two girls nor the girl in black. They must have gotten on their bus which was already waiting, and it must have already driven off. I spent the next ten minutes walking around with the banknotes held between the thumb and the forefinger of one hand, trying to find them among other groups of Japanese people some of whom must have wondered what I want when I approach and ask whether everything is all right. I should have asked instead whether everyone in their group is alright. But anyway I could not find the girl I looked for.

Two times already that I have missed the view from the train, for the reason of having had a hard sleep the night earlier. The first time was when I went from Rome to Pisa, the second time when from Verona to Florence.

Florence has many American schools, colleges and universities, for example Drake, Harvard, New York, Syracuse, University of Michigan and University of Wisconsin. For scuole di lingua there is the Centro Linguistico Italiano Dante Alighieri among others. The mails cost the same to

within Italy and to countries in the E.U., likewise the mails to America cost the same as those to Asia. There is one Church of England, the St. Mark's Church on Via Maggio.

§

The last day of the trip I leave Florence for Rome. Just one station off from the city we pass through a long tunnel inside of which we spend a couple of minutes. This is to be followed by two more tunnels of shorter lengths. A Eurostar is a fast train which I seldom use. I normally travel on either a Eurocity or an Intercity. Today a Eurostar is thirty-five minutes late, and I wonder to myself as I sit on a Eurocity whether it worths travelling on the first one or rather that one uses the latter when the former runs this late.

They put a tractor on adaptive wheels and run it on the rail tracks. The tractor has four wheels, two large ones in the back and two small ones in the front. Each of these wheels rests on top of a wheel with flange to run on top of the rails, coupling with it in such a way that when you drive the former forward the latter will move backward. The tractor therefore must run in the reverse gear if it wants to move in the same direction it is facing, and vice versa. What you could do with invention!

We pass S. Giovanni Valdarno, then Arezzo at 11:13 and Chiusi Chianciano Terme at 11:59. The train is more or less running in a straight line but there are so many tunnels that by 13:25 we must have passed through more than ten of them. After arriving in Rome I have the rest of the afternoon free so I could visit the University of Rome. Then I get on the 19:36 train at Tiburtina and soon find myself arriving at the Fumicino Airport.

§

The metro stations in Rome have two free magazines called Leggo and Metro. While I am here there are news about Miss Universe contest, extraterrestrial bacteria extracted from ancient meteorites by researchers at the Federico II University in Naples, a protest held at the Colosseum in Rome, Germany saying that strawberries and fruits from Italy are treated by chemicals which are poisons to human, and Michael Schumacher in Austria. The Horoscope columns say, *Ariete, Toro, Gemelli, Cancro, Leone, Vergine, Bilancia, Scorpione, Sagittario, Capricorno, Acquario and Pesci.*

Yesterday's visit to the Citta University was quite interesting. I had a look at the Department of Physics and the Geology and Mineralogy Buildings. At the former there was an exhibition where old high-voltage meters. A plaque on the wall said something about Fermi and the history related to him. There was one photo there where he was taken in the

company of Heidelberg and where surprisingly Pauli is also not excluded. There was another photo of five Italian physicists contemporary to and including Fermi, all of them young and famous. The Mineral Department has a mineral collection room which only opens until one P.M. on Friday, and it was already late afternoon of Friday yesterday when I was there so I never find out what the collection is like. However, there was a corridor in which were hung large posters some of which shows geological features, others mineral deposits. Models of all crystals are displayed on shelves in glass cases. Apart from these there were a gallery of contemporary, and another one of classical art, but these also were not open yesterday when I was there. There was a library called Liberia Alexandra. The lift which goes up to it is dilapidated and has walls of corrugated aluminium. the ceiling inside the lift was covered with vandalised scribbles. The shape of the lift was that of an oblongated rectangle with the door on one of the longer sides and way off its centre to one side, which makes the lift looked very odd. That visit to the university makes my going from Termini to Tiburtina station on foot seems worthwhile. The train ticket to go to the Fumicino Airport costs 9,000 Lire if you go from Tiburtina and 17,000 if from Termini. So admittedly it was only in order to save some money that made me walk.

When I first arrived here eleven days ago from Heathrow, I asked a policeman at a kiosk at the train station at the airport about how to go from there into Rome, and he said that I could buy a Metro/Bus ticket from the kiosk for 8,500 Lire and use it to go to the city centre as well as to go on any bus or metro for the rest of the day. I bought one and proudly handed it over to a controller on board the train when he came around and asked to see a ticket, and he handed it back, did not seem to mind. But I found out later written on the back of the ticket that it does not include the trip to the airport from either of the two main station, and so I think that trip I made from the airport into Rome should likewise be excluded. That controller must have noticed this but for some reason had decided not to say anything. I am only a foreigner anyway who had just arrived, or so he must have thought. The night before that I stayed at the departure, upstairs at the airport, and waited. The next two nights I stayed at the Youth Hostel to which I had made a booking and paid for through the International Booking Network. None of the staffs at the hostel was kind. This was perhaps another reason why I liked to stay outside in train stations instead of spending a night at more hostels. When I told him that the lock I had was too small for the padlock one staff, instead of directing me to a vending machine which sells locks close by, only said that he could not help. I had only to come across that machine by chance to realise how unhelpful one human being

can be to another. I knew that there is a booklet containing details of Youth Hostels in Italy, and you could ask for one for free. So I asked one staff at the counter for one, but he refused to give me any and yet afterwards tried to sell it for 5,000 Lire I think, I can not remember.

Planes which take off from the Leonardo da Vinci Airport (Fiumicino) fly straight over the sea. Now that I am back home, my finger nails have grown a little over one millimetre longer and my beard has become three to four millimetres long and is uneven. During the trip I stayed two nights at an airport, two at a youth hostel, one on the train, one by the seaside, and the rest at train stations where I once slept on an empty train.

On the way back we see from the plane two islands to the right hand side, the second one larger than the first. The coastline of Italy alone is already a spectacular sight to look at. Then there is Nice to the left. I sit on a window seat two rows behind the right wing. Most seats behind me are empty. May be the idea is to put the load on the head or middle of the aeroplane where the wings are to get the best balance because that is where it is most stable. We must be flying somewhat higher when we pass the Alps on our way back than we did when we flew to Rome, because we do not pass over Mont Blanc at as close a range and we can see more mountains of the range than we could before. Now we can see a carpet of all the snowy peaks towards the 1:30 direction.

We are flying away from the sun, keeping it behind and to the right of us. This makes the landscape ahead of us look better because no light gets into your eyes. I changed seats several times. There is a backmost seat which seems to be a favourite of one air hostess, because I notice that she has put her hat there and she shooed me away when I sit there too long. The view of the Alps from that seat is terrific. Another romantic woman at work!

My beard must be as grisly to look at as it is prickly to feel. I forgot to bring a razor along with me, so I have left the beard grow unabated for ten days. Last night at the airport one security staff knocked at the door of the disabled toilet where I was inside. Two more asked me later for passport, which I duly showed. Two people who slept on a seat behind me seemed to be genuinely homeless. They had too many bags and seemed a little too much at home, not looking forward to anything.

§

Public parks in Manchester are improving both in safety and facilities. There are many new play areas built for young children. The physical ability of human beings always amazes me whenever I see very young children climb the equipments in one of these play areas, some of which must be twice their height or more. These facilities are either developed

or redeveloped since 1994. There are now 58 play areas, namely Alderman Rodgers Park, Alexandra Park, Ancoats, Barrack Park, Bradford Park, Brookdale Park, Chapel Street Park, Cheetham Park, Chesterton Road, Chorlton Park, Chorlton Water Park, Claton Park, Cringle Fields, Crowcroft Park, Crumpsall Park, Culmere Road, Danson Street, David Lewis Recreation Ground, Debdale Park, Delamere Park, Didsbury Park, Douro Street, Fog Lane Park, Gorton Park, Heaton Park Grand Lodge, Greenbank Park, Haveley Park, Heristone Road Park, Hewlett Park, Hollyhedge Park, Hulme Park, Iron Street, Irk Valley Estate, Kingswood Road Park, Kirkup Gardens, Kirkhaven Green, Lightbowne Fun Play Area, Manley Park, Medlock Play Area, Milky Button Play Area, Moss Side Green, Moss Side Park, Nuthurst Road Park, Old Moat Park, Painswick Park, Philips Park, Plant Hill Park, Platt Fields Park, Queens Park, Rosebery Street, Heaton Park St. Margarets, Scotland Hall Road, Smeaton Street, Smedley Playing Fields, Southwick Road, Sunnybrow Park, Victoria Mill Park, and Wythenshawe Park.

The Spring of 2001 is here. Manchester is still going ahead in full steam. The second runway of the Manchester Airport was opened in February. It is three kilometres long, built by AMEC-Carillion and costed £172 million. The sunken garden at Piccadilly Gardens has been filled in, and a new garden is being build which is designed by Tadao Ando. There will also be an office and restaurant building. The aim is to regenerate the garden and bring it and the city together. The plan is a good one in that the bus and metro stations will be separated from the garden by a pavilion building. A catwalk bridge will direct people from the other side of the garden through a fountain plaza towards an opening in the wall which immediately opens on to the stations. There will be a new Visitor Centre in the Millennium Quarter. Market Street will be refurbished and paved in a £2.2 million package.

Kit the Kat is launched as the mascot for the 17^{th} Commonwealth Games. East Manchester is about to be regenerated. The City of Manchester Stadium is taking shape under Laing. It is funded by Manchester City Council and Sport England. When finished there will be eight spiral pedestrian access ramps on both sides of it, like eight spring tautly coiled, about to shoot eight arrows up towards heaven. While the Belle Vue Leisure Centre is undergoing redevelopment, the Bolton Arena which is to host the Badminton events has already been completed and opened to the public. During the Games, TVNZ will broadcast to New Zealand and the Pacific islands, namely Cook Islands, Fiji, Niue, Samoa and Tonga; ABC will broadcast to Australia.

A new hall of residence is currently being built for the Royal Northern College of Music under the Private Finance Initiative, and will have

600 rooms when finished. The Higher Education Funding Council wants to make it a path-finder project which will be used as a model for future halls of residence across the country. Jarvis University Partnerships Programme carries out this work, funded by Abbey National Treasury Services, which has the initial cost of £22 million.

The City Art Gallery expansion project has obtained £15 million from the Heritage Lottery, towards the total cost of £25 million. The £29 million Urbis Centre designed by Ian Simpson Architects is being built by Laing. Harvey Nicholsis is under construction opposite Marks & Spencer, at £24 million.

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I now live at the flat AD12 of Grosvenor Place, M1 7HR. This is my longest residence in the U.K. I have lived here since September 2000, and it's been nearly one year already. Accommodation is rather difficult to find now. It will not be as difficult after the coming Commonwealth Games. As it is, I could only managed to find a place at the Sir Charles Groves Hall of Residence, which is being built at the moment. It is going to be next door to the Royal Northern College of Music. It is to be a pilot model for the future privatised university accommodation, the first one of its kind. Belonging to Jarvis, however, it makes you think twice before deciding to live there, since the Student Village, which also belongs to the company, is not very well reputed. The street occupied by the Student Village was until recently rather dubious. It is also close to the Manchester Metropolitan University and all. At a roundabout not far away from there I was nearly mugged once in 1995, when I had to run up the slope to where the traffic is and then jump on to the road.

I know the name Sir Charles Groves because of the authoritative Groves' Dictionary of Music. Even an old version that Ben has are already marvellous. I want to know what it is like to live in a cubicle. It is built by stacking ready-made blocks of rooms on top of one another. There is probably a steel structure which holds these units loosely together.

I have put most of my belongings in my lockers in the rooms C62 and B9 at the university. I am going to back to Thailand soon, and will only move into the new place when I come back. On the last night at Grosvenor Place we have a party where Dmitris brought Ouso and I smoke my first cigarette he in five years. I find myself still able to smoke to my heart's content the same way I used to do but no longer want to come back to it again afterwards, which proves the magic of my departure from cigarettes genuine.

Next day is the last day, and I am the last one to move out. Dave had moved out nearly a week ago. Since he only moved in towards the end

of our stay, I hardly know him except that he studies laser engineering and that his father is a retired astronomer who used to work at the Max Planck Institut in Germany. On the day he moved out I met his father. He knew that I wanted to work in Astronomy, so he knocked on my door to introduce me to his dad. I showed him Fred Hoyle's book "Home is where the wind blows" and we talked for a while. He said, 'I agree with his steady state theory. There must be a flaw somewhere that we still don't know yet. The universe can't just come out of nothing.'

The cleaning lady give me some of the cooking utensils which are left behind. I make many pizzas again. When night comes, I return the key to the porter. Out at the gate, another porter looks in at the huge open rubbish container that has to be lifted by a truck, for things which should not have been thrown away. He shows me to a couple of things and says that I should take them if I wish, it would be a waste if they were to be thrown away. I duly take a Chinese dictionary which I like, and which I know he would not need. I stay in the computer cluster the whole night, and in the morning lug my suitcase and luggage on my trolley to the Piccadilly Square where I get on a bus to go to the airport. I fly to Thailand and stay there seventeen days.

I arrive Ḍaunmuang to find out that my big suitcase has been damaged because I had put in it too many books, withdrawn music books given away by the RNCM. The following day when they bomb the World Trade Center I am riding on a bus in Ḅạngrak, when the siren of a fire brigade sounds, dashes past us towards the right before coming back again and then overtakes us. But I do not know about the incident until more than one hour later when my mother calls from Jiangmhăị to tell me to turn on the television. Then we exchange short calls back and forth a few times when I said, "Let's pray there will be no war!" Two days later, on 13th September 2001, I had one of my molar teeth root-treated for the first time. To have a tooth root-treated is essentially to have it killed. The nerves are taken out, and the tooth will never feel anything again. And since the nervous systems are all wired up and linked, who knows what happens in the roots will not affect anything else down the line.

When I visit Jiangmhăị I swim everyday. When I board the plane in Bangkok after my vacation, for the first time my pocket knife with its two-inch razor-sharp blade is taken away on custody. The air-hostess says, 'We will look after your weapon for you,' and I thank her. Months after the bombing of the World Trade, nobody is to complain however he is delayed by the procedure at the airport. I can not help thinking that terrorists seem to bomb only ugly buildings. When I was in New York in August 1997, I looked up at the buildings for a long time. They were so tall I had to be seated and recline myself in order to do so. I made up

my mind whether to take a photo of them. In the end I did not. They were ugly I thought, 'Look like two boxes.'

The IRA bomb in Manchester the same year was also targeted at an exceedingly ugly building, the Arndale Centre. Manchester shrank and shrank after its heyday until everything retreated into the Arndale Centre. It became the only surviving shopping area where the shops were not too quiet but way busier than elsewhere. I do not know whether it was the bomb that triggered more beautiful things to come up to challenge Uncle Arndale, or whether it was the Labour government that influence the regeneration of the city. Anyway, regeneration it is, and a marvellous one too. This was the home of industries and the origin of the labour movement. No wonder whenever Conservative Party rules, Manchester will be left to fall into ruin. But it rises again like a phoenix. The Commonwealth Games is a strategic move on Tony Blair's part. Even more so is to make Manchester a gateway that bridges the United Kingdom and the European Union. Nowhere else in the whole country is qualified. Historically, this is the origin of the computer and the seat of industry, labour, and co-operative movements.

Workers in Victorian times pushed for the right to have half a holiday on Saturday. Even nowadays, there are still companies which require their employees to work half a day on Saturday. A relic of this can be seen in the movie, not such a long time ago, the *Saturday's night fever*. Delights were on Saturday nights which are now usually on Friday nights. From April until October 2001 the Pump House People's History Museum have an exhibition 'All our Saturdays.' A part of the exhibition is about Belle Vue, a somewhat barren ground now to the southeast, which you reach first when you go to Gorton. There used to be among other things a zoo there where there was a huge African bull-elephant.

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It has been nearly two weeks since the bombing in New York. America has been looking for allies in its attack on Afghanistan. Nobody around there likes the Taliban. It is only the question of who hate the Taliban more than the U.S. Pakistan is still thinking whether to allow U.S. ground troop to mount the attack from there. The latter would need its help because it has half of Afghanistan's border. Iran sticks to the U.N. as usual.

Apart from commonplace celebrity news, the newspapers in the U. K. are interesting. You can read through them for hours without getting bored. Sénégal which used to be colonial to France and which gained its independence in 1960 has its football team won an opening match against France and so in June 2002 'France est élim' becomes the slogan for the people in Sénégal, it entered the World Cup while France was

dropped out, there is a mass slaughter of chickens for the cockerel has been defeated by the Lions, and public holidays have been announced for three days. The country is still very poor and Dakar, its capital city, looks like a big open market. A man called Dudley Higgins from Jamaica and arrested by the West Midlands police was convicted for a post-office robbery. In jail he met Mark Vendryes who had done the robbery. In fact he had done it twice and got caught in the second time.

In England and Wales since 1985, the Crown Prosecution Service prosecutes people who have been charged with a criminal offence by the police. Before 1880, people employed their own lawyers to bring criminal cases to court. Around the end of the 19th century the police forces, then newly created, employed lawyers to bring cases to court for them. In the 20th century when some police forces set up their internal departments of prosecuting solicitors, the public criticised the police for both investigating and prosecuting cases. The Royal Commission decided in 1981 that the police be the one who investigates, but there should be a separate Service which handles the prosecution.

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I move into Sir Charles Grove on Thursday 27th September. The flat I move into is E4-2A. The construction works are still going on in force. The courtyard in the middle is still unpaved, the concert stage there is still not raised, and the lifts are not yet installed. I arrive from the airport and lie down on a sofa waiting for the key into my room.

There is to be no lift for the next few months during the same period of which the courtyard is painted and then paved, and huge foam blocks are installed under the stage and synthetic grass spread over them. During this time I never know my way around the courtyard; one day it is this way, the next day it is another. I climb up and down the stairs to the fourth floor several times a day.

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My present accommodation has 612 rooms, 160 of which are reserved for students of the Royal Northern College of Music. It is run by the University Partnership Programme, and is managed by Jarvis Workplace Facilities Management. My room is a disabled room, which makes it wider than the rest. There would have been room enough to put a baby grand piano in. The toilet is quite large inside and there is a seat under the shower. There are two disabled alarms, one in the room and the other one in the toilet. In the shared kitchen there is another alarm. When I first moved in I though they were switches for the lights. I pulled one of them and that set the alarm off. I tried several buttons but none of them would turn off the alarm. In the end I found the circuit breakers

above the door, so I pulled it down and that stopped short the alarm. Later I found out how to turn the alarm off. You need to press two of the buttons at once.

Rob was already here when I moved in. He studies Physics at the University of Manchester where he does a Ph.D. in Quantum Mechanics. At the beginning he enjoyed the night life in Manchester greatly, but as the study gets more difficult he gradually stopped. Now he lives on baked beans on toasts while writing papers until the small hours everyday, and once went to a conference in America where he said he enjoyed the night life again.

Aspasia was the third person to move into our flat. 'My name is the name of a courtesan in the past,' she said. She is doing a Ph.D. on gypsies in Greek. She studies sociology and has parties every week, sometimes every other day.

'Oh, Gosh! I need to finish writing a conference paper tonight,' she said one night, somewhat proudly.

'What is it about?', I asked.

'Gypsy dancing,' was the answer.

'Gypsy dancing,' I repeated to myself, 'Dionysus!'

'No Dionysus! I am not going to mention anything about Dionysus. It has got nothing to do with Gypsy dancing.'

'Not even in the introduction?', I asked.

Then, 'How can you do a research on dancing and not mention the dancing spirit of the Zulus, let alone Bacchus?'

'Because I don't like Dionysus. That's why,' she raised her voice.

'But it is an important fact in the history. You can't possibly ignore such huge facts. That would not be an objective research.'

She seemed crossed and said, 'I do not believe in object researches. A research can never be objective because objectivity never exist.'

'But I believe that it exists,' I said, 'And even if they did not, the fact that you have at least strived towards it would have been enough already.'

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When I flew to Manchester on the Singapore Airline we stopped at the Changi Airport for transit. There are two terminals. The departure transit level there is like a world of its own. There are food, drinks, movies and televisions for sports, news, cartoons or discovery. There are transfer lounges, hotels, and a swimming pool. And there is a free tour of the city if your transit is longer than five hours. There is a train connecting the two terminals, but they are not that far from each other and you could walk from one to the other along a corridor. Interestingly there are bamboo-, cactus- and orchid gardens, and there is a Koi pond.

Koi is the Japanese name for the fancy carp. A homonym of this word means *love* in the Japanese language.

The Cactus Garden is really a garden. It is outside and on the upper floor. There is a bar selling drinks and people can smoke here. The air suddenly becomes humid on going outside, not unlike that in Cairns, Australia. There are more than ten different cactuses.

Man must live with nature, even in Singapore where the lands are limited. Here there is the Sungei Buloh Nature Park where you can see migrating birds from Siberia every year between September and March.

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We never take time to write down soon enough very big events of the world because they seem so big when they are still present, that we never dream we will ever forget them. But as time passes by, life goes on and we forget everything those things we never have dreamt before we would forget. Anyway, history is just history. America is bombing Afghanistan in order to catch Bin Laden death or alive, preferably the former. Blair is lobbying countries all around to persuade them that this attack is justified. 'Al-Qaeda must go. After this we will be busy reconstructing Afghanistan anew,' this is how the promises run. When the former has really gone, there would be no one who remember this promise anyway. Or even if we happen in the future to come across newspaper cuttings of this time, or to read something about such promises unfulfilled, it would not matter anyway since everything would have been much dampened out by time and later events in the course of history. But it is always good to see someone who shows the right attitude and at least not too arrogant.

'Before he became the president,' Aspasia said one day, 'he answered, when asked by a reporter, that he did not know whom the prime minister of Pakistan was.'

'That was someone who is now the leader of the world,' she concluded.

Bush is by no means the only one among the American population who never condescend to learn something about the rest of the world. A news reporter in the US once ended his report with, 'Cardiff, England.' Well, Cardiff is in reality the capital of Wales.

If I were a Muslim, I would live in England never in America. May be it is because the Church of England had also been repressed before, by the Catholic Church, they generally have good will towards Muslims who love peace and who are not arrogant. The media here thus say that Al-Qaeda must be busted but not bombed.

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The second time I bought the Megarider ticket was on Monday Ø:6[th]

May. I took the bus number 85 in the morning from in front of the Sir Charles Groves hall of residence to Piccadilly Garden and then took number 41 to Sale. The bus passed through the Mersey Valley. Here on both sides of the road the trees grow so dense that they meet one another at the top to form a ceiling of branches above the bus, which makes you feel like driving through a tunnel. The bus came out from this tunnel into Sale, where the raised footpaths on both sides are wide, which makes it looks like the streets in America.

Stockport is a town in the southeastern region of the Greater Manchester. It marks the border between the city and the countryside. The bus station here received in 1984 an award for being the best kept station. The station is situated in a nice spot on the high bank of the River Mersey. But you can not easily see the river from the stands because there are many trees. Nearby is the Hat Museum and the public library is only five minutes away on foot. From the Stockport station you can take a bus to Hayfield in the Peak District national park and outside Manchester.

Not far from Stockport is the Offerton Estate, a residential village which looks out on to the countryside and open fields behind it that stretch all the way towards the mountains in the distance. From Stockport you can take a local bus to nearby places like Bosden Farm, Romiley where the road winds its way through hills, or to places as further away as Bolton which is on the other side of Manchester.

Using the Megarider ticket Stockport becomes my paradise since there are always plenty of buses here even on Sunday and bank holidays. Also, most of the buses here are Stagecoach Manchester buses, and the ticket I mentioned is only valid on them. Therefore on Wednesday I come here again an catch the number 22 bus to go to Bolton. Number 22 buses are run by two different companies. The one I got on is not run by Stagecoach Manchester but the driver said it was all right. The bus is a double decker and I sit on the upper deck. It takes more than one hour on the bus to go to Bolton. We stop for ten minutes at the Trafford Centre. In Bolton I walk around but finally end up in the Bolton Art Gallery. After the gallery I get on another bus and after one hour find myself in Preston which is outside Manchester and for which my ticket is not valid. There is another free ride ticket for a day which costs the same as my ticket does for a week. I think that the driver did not look at my ticket carefully, and I did not know; I thought Preston was also in Greater Manchester. I should have known since it is a very long ride from Bolton to Preston. From Preston there are buses to Blackpool and Lake District. But it is already late in the afternoon and it would be hours to go to Blackpool and back, let alone to go to the Lake District,

so I decide to take the same bus to go back to Bolton. It is now that the driver tells me that I am not supposed to come here on my ticket, but since I tell him that the first driver let me get on the other bus, this second driver lets me ride on his bus back to the other end of the line as a second wrong which rights the first.

River Tame and River Goyt meet each other at Stockport to form River Mersey which runs all the way through the southern part of Manchester, where it forms the Mersey Valley, to Liverpool, where it forms the Mersey Estuary. Fifteen years ago they were regarded as one of the most polluted river systems in Europe. Today it becomes an asset of North West England. The Mersey Basin Campaign was set up in 1985, and in 1995 the University of Liverpool completed the management plan for the Mersey Estuary. Since then fish like chub, dab, dace, dogfish, flounder, mackerel, plaice, roach and tope have been coming back. On the bank of River Goyt to the west of Stockport are the Vernon Park and the Woodbank Memorial Park. These are wonderful, considering that they are very close to a city. There are a few trails, for example the Valley Way and the Midshire Way.

The bus number 458 which says Birchhill Circle takes me to Wardle, a nice and small town. It looks like there is a senior ball at the Wardle High School today. Students are all dressed up, one girl dresses in an evening dress which has only one shoulder.

Shop names are sometimes quite imaginative and interesting to read. Thus *Pressing Matter* is a cloth pressing shop and *How Bazaar* a restaurant in Manchester.

Here in Manchester the Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service manages close to 40 sites on the Mersey Valley from Didsbury to Flixton. The Chorlton Water Park is one of these which, together with the Sale Water Park a kilometre downstream, was excavated for gravel to build the M63 motorway. The area has footpaths and bridle ways. You can do orienteering here and at the lake you can canoe, windsurf, and sail with permits obtainable from the wardens, or angle for Bream, Carp, Perch, Pike, Roach, and Tench. The water is up to five metres deep.

The Mersey Valley lies along the Trans-Pennine corridor which stretches from Liverpool on the west coast to Hull on the east coast. This is a trade corridor which links everything from Ireland to Germany to the former eastern European countries, resulting in Manchester having 21 per cent of national GDP with its 12 million population. But more than forty per cent of investments in Manchester comes from North America, with the European Union coming second just below forty per cent.

There are flood basins along the River Mersey, for example the Ees flood basin in Sale. The name *Sale* is pronounced as though its last

vowel has an acute accent on top. These basins are flooded whenever the level of water in the river is becoming too high. Farmers also used to flood their farms, as recently as the 1950s that is. When the first flood came, the sluice gate was never opened as it brought rubbish. The second flood was different because it brought rich mud.

From Manchester the river Mersey runs into north Cheshire where the Mersey estuary begins. In the upper estuary the river is narrow but expands greatly once it has passed Runcorn where the last bridge, the Runcorn Bridge, is situated. The river is at its widest point at Speke where there is the half-timbered Elizabethan Speke Hall. Three miles away on the opposite bank of the Hall is the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port. There are several country parks around this area and birdwatchers may see dunlin, knot, redshank, buzzards, peregrine falcons and kestrels. This is the heart of the estuary. Further down the river you will come to Liverpool where there are ferries linking Pier Head with Seacombe and Birkenhead on the opposite bank. The Albert Dock in Liverpool is the home of a Tate gallery but also has the darker side of its past linked with trading of slaves to America.

There are four Tate galleries – Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, Tate Liverpool, and Tate St. Ives. Tate Gallery in London became Tate Britain in March 2000. In May the same year Tate Modern opened which is designed by Herzog and De Meuron. Tate Liverpool displays modern art in a nineteenth-century warehouse at Albert Dock which has been converted by James Stirling and Michael Wilford. Tate St. Ives has a great view of the ocean, and displays twentieth century art.

Wirral coast links the Mersey Estuary with the Dee Estuary. The Hilbre Islands off the shore on the mouth of the Dee River is accessible during low tides and is a mile's walk from the coast. On the island there is a colony of seals.

There are three museums which are related to the canals of Britain. The Boat Museum just mentioned is one. The other two are the Canal Museum in Stoke Bruerne and the National Waterways Museum in Gloucester Docks.

Manchester sits between two national parks. To the north is the Lake District, and to the south the Peak District. Between these two the Lake District is more famous, partly because of the grandeur of its mountains, partly because of the names of poets like Wordsworth. While the Peak District contains highlands and moors like the Kinder Scout peak, the Lake District has forests and lakes, for example the Windermere lake.

In the Peak District national park there is a town called Rowsley where there is a Victorian mill that is still working. The Caudwell's Mill was built in 1874 by John Caudwell. It is powered by two water turbines,

one installed in 1898, the other one in 1914. The former is the smaller one and is now used to power the provender mill.

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When I was here in 1994 I banked at Barclay. When I came back in 2000 I found that I could not open an account at Barclay before I registered, so I put my money into National Westminster instead. The Royal Bank of Scotland then gave interest rates which are higher than other banks, and Dirk saved his money there. The bank was established in 1727 and during the 18^{th} century worked only within Scotland. In 1814 it had its first branch in London. In 2000 it took over the Natwest group. In Europe, it is only second to HSBC in terms of Market Capitalisation. Next to it are respectively Lloyds TSB, UBS, Barclays, HBOS, Credit Suisse, BNP Paribas, and Deutsche Bank.

There is a big Italian community here. The Italian Festival in Manchester comes two days before the Queen's golden jubilee. The flag throwers, *sbandieratori* in Italian, from Alba in the Piemonte province around Turin who performed here last year are back again. Their uniform is still red and white, but it looks more beautiful this year. The region in Italy where they come from is famous for the barolo wine. They perform many times on both occasions, the festival and the jubilee. They play with side drums and trumpets. The flags are almost as wide as the poles, and the poles are nearly six feet long. Before a throw the thrower runs one hand loosely down the pole, and thus pulling the flag together. Then the other hand which holds the handle shoots the flag up in the air like a dart. The flag spreads in the air and effectively controls the speed and direction of the pole after it has reached its highest point. Sometimes they stand in a circle and throw the flags at the same time to a partner who stands on the opposite side.

Apart from the Italian festival there is also an Irish festival each year in March to celebrate the St. Patrick's Day. In 2001 it is the sixth festival. There is a big community of Irish and Italian people in Manchester.

The Jubilee on Monday 3^{rd} June 2002 is a bank holiday. There are festivals going on at the same time in Albert Square, Exchange Square, St. Ann's Square and St. Ann's Street. I watch flag throwers perform at Exchange Square. Here BBC has put up a huge screen to show live music and broadcast events going on at Buckingham Palace. At Cathedral Gardens there are performances by Tashi Lhunpo or Tibetan monks. When I take pictures, a big man ask me where I am from. I think he thinks that I may come from China. It could be that the Chinese government does not like Lamas preaching their religion and thus culture. The Feast of Delights Parade is organised by Asda, the American Supermarket chain. It starts from Corporation Street and passes along Cross St., St. Ann St.,

Deansgate, John Dalton St., and ends in Albert Square. Around 2,000 people from more than 60 different groups take part. The flag throwers are here again, and I follow them up and down the streets even though it drizzles most of the time.

At UMIST I am one of the six postgraduate student representatives in the Graduate School Council which was established since August 1994, just one month before I began my M.Sc. course. My term is six months, from December 2001 until June 2002. There are meetings about once a month. I almost always have something to say in each meeting. But I guess I am never good at convincing people to do what I say, and my thoughts are nearly never followed. I wonder why they selected me in the first place. Would it not be better to hold meetings without inviting me to join in, if no one is going to heed me anyway? They plan to remove master degree's dissertations from the Joule Library, instead of trying to find a way to increase the storage space there. If you do not value the works you produce, then you can not expect the rest of the world to value your graduates. And if your dissertation is anything short of a masterpiece, then it is your education system that is at fault and needs improvement.

I am also a member of the Library Services Sub-committee which meet irregularly. Our library at UMIST is called the Joule Library. It is a small library and therefore does not attract national funding like the lottery fund. Ours is an institute of technology so the books in the library are mostly only those in Engineering. The committee plans to get rid of old books from the store room, and I try to convince them against this but to no avail. I say something in every one of our meetings, but have come to realise that we student representatives are only there as a decoration. None of the ideas that I suggested has been carried out. For instance, the outer door of one of the men's toilets in the library has no handle. There is a hole in the door panel where the lock used to be, into which you have to put your finger in order to pull the door open. As the door is quite heavy, it is not good for your finger. And if someone on the outside of the toilet should push at the door when you have just put your finger into the hole you could hurt your finger.

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On the fourth of June the year 2002 I went for a walk which started from the Platt Fields park and ended walking from the new Millennium Stadium along the Ashton Canal, passed the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk to the new flats along both sides of the Ashton Canal past the Great Ancoats Street to the Piccadilly Station. I bought some cookies from the supermarket KwikSave before I reached Platt Fields from home. There were only a few people there, both at the supermarket and at the park. I

crossed the Wilmslow road to the Danes road and veered off into a path towards the right at the end of the latter. There is another path which traverses the playing field just behind the university sport hall towards the Birchfields Primary School, but it was closed for the moment. A gate shut it off with the sign saying that it was closed because the path condition was bad. Some people do get up early and go for a walk. Even on the second and last day of the Queen's golden jubilee on the throne like today I saw a few people already jogging or walking dogs.

Yesterday there was a big festival in the city to mark the occasion. There was a big procession in the afternoon which started from the Victoria station and wound its way here and there to finish in front of the town hall. Amidst the drizzle the flag throwers team from Italy attracted me through out the whole day, but quite a few other groups in the procession were ingeniously dressed or gave ideas funny to look at. I went back to the Sir Charles Groves hall of residence where I lived to rest. My flat mate Ash was antisocial again by smoking marijuana in the corridor, so I went to sleep just to wake up too late to catch the flag throwers' last performance of the day at the Cathedral Garden.

I went along the Mosley Road then the Albert Road and then the Stockport Road. There the surrounding does not look very safe and there is a residential area on the east of the Stockport Road which you would not have liked to walk in to because it looks like a strong hold, pretty much similar but to a lesser degree to what Moss Side did in 1994 before they pulled all the buildings down and replaced them with normal residential buildings or better, effectively rubbing a less graceful history off the area. Most of the windows there are barred. I chose a small side way that looks reasonably safe to cut across to the Broom Lane. From there it is not far to the beginning of the path which follows the Fallowfield Brook. I saw two backhoes, one working on the bed of the brook and the other parked on a bridge nearby. They must be trying to turn it into a road or something, because the surface they cleared looks a little too wide for the bed of a water course. I cut across a piece of land where there is an ugly rubbish dump ground as well as tall beautiful rustling trees towards the Holmcroft Road. Here the sign in front of a high school does not say *St. Albans* as it does on my map. Also everywhere but especially around here there were many flags hanging from windows, the Union Jack and the English flag which is essentially a red cross on white.

I walked, following a path whenever possible or else a road, to the Gorton Reservoir. Here I have a memory where one summer day in 1995 Clare or Clara, Asim and I sat talking. Clare used to live close by, and we used to visit her weekly following our looking after her on a trip

to Cornwall organised by John who is the manager of the Community Action at UMIST. She would tell us about her life and fed me with Kit-Kat, and we would go for a walk to the lake, the Gorton Reservoir, if it is a nice day. One day I painted the small room under the stairs in white for her. Afterward we sat and had some tea at the table in the kitchen, and then moved to the back lawn and sat in the sun. The grass was getting a bit long but looked so green I could not resist doing some somersault and then lay down on my back. Clare could see light and movements but not faces. Since her second husband died she has been registered as blind. When I came back to Manchester again last year I walked pass her place on Havers Road, but there was a sign saying that it was for sale. I then wrote to Alison her grand daughter, and she replied to me at the Grosvenor Place and said that her grand mother has moved to a home for elderly people called the April Park in Derbyshire.

There are many public footpath in England but camping can be more difficult than in many other countries. Most of the lands here are privately owned.

On that day the weather was nice and so we sent for a walk to the reservoir. Manchester was not as safe in 1995 as it is in now, there were always news of people being mugged on the Oxford Road and elderly people robbed both in their homes and on the street, so I was always anxious wherever I walked then. This is probably one of the reasons why people always keep dogs, especially those who live in Gorton. The practice which has carried on to today when the city has gotten much safer to live in. We sat talking for a while. There were children jumping from the platform which juts out into the lake. I related what goes on around us to Clare as she could not see well. Then she said that she could sit there on her own and that Asim and I should go for a walk along the path by the side of the reservoir. There were quite a few gentle people around walking with or without their dogs and it looked quite safe, so we went for a walk for about fifteen minutes. I remembered the path was a bit narrow at one point, there were some prickly brambles about and some climbing up and down. In the end I think we went to the furthest tip of the reservoir but presumably the golf course there was much more closed to the public back then and there was no way we could enter it, so we came back to Clare was sitting the way we went and could never manage to walk right around the lake.

But today it was different for the path was much wider and neither the steep, narrow path nor the brambles were nowhere to be found. Moreover this time I could cut across the golf course, climbed over the neck-high masonry wall with the suggestion of the golfers, into King's Road which was also a part of the Tameside Trail. I caught a glimpse of the Auden-

shaw Reservoirs from atop the flyover where the Audenshaw Road goes over the new extension to the motorway M60. Unlike the Gorton reservoir which I think is more for recreation and agriculture, the Audenshaw reservoirs seem to be for water supply. Therefore they are out of bound to the public and there are signs which say that it is on a private ground. That does not worry me much because to me it looks ugly anyway. It looks like a dam with clear-cut paved steep bank and no beaches or any plant. Having a few times more surface area than the Gorton reservoir it is much less well known. I think I now know the reason why. The water table must be more than 30 feet or some ten metres above the M60 motorway, which makes it near totally hidden from the eyes. You have to be on top of the flyover I mentioned to see it.

I walked along the southern bank of the Ashton Canal. It is a dug canal. On the bank opposite to where I was there are houses with their backs bordering the canal. I thought to myself that this is why they advertised, "this is not Venice, this is Manchester". It looks so serene. There were people angling and water birds of the duck family cruising about. I walked towards the east passing quite a few people along the way, some with their dogs, some jogging or cycling.

Just past underneath the extension to the M60 there was a red car submerged in the water of the canal. On the opposite bank behind it there were two trails on the grass leading up to the motorway. Obviously enough the car came down that way along those trails after having left the road. Once in the water it went further and hit the stones which line the side of the canal. The windscreen is shattered and the car radio came off and floated up just underneath it. The length of the car is more than half the width of the canal. I never found out whether it was an accident or a ridding of a stolen car. One moment ago I was on a flyover above the M60, now I am on the bank of a canal below it.

On the opposite bank as I walked further there are old mills. There are the Junction Mill, the Tudor Mill built in 1905, and the Cavendish Mill which was built in 1884 with its fire proof concrete floor. It was closed down in 1934 and was turned into flats in 1994. The Ashton canal branches to the right when passing these mill, and goes over the river Tame which runs some forty feet below it. It is wonderful to see a canal going over a river. The roman ducts in the past must have been something similar. I have been coming from the direction of Droylsden and Manchester, turning right will lead me to Marple, Whaley Bridge, and Macclesfields, and if I carry on along the path I will reach Huddersfield and Narrow Canal. I turned right and walked along the Peak Forest Canal. These canals were used for barges carrying cotton from farms to the mills and from there on to Manchester where there was a ship canal

and piers to accommodate ships coming from the ocean. When people built things like canals they might have thought that it was to be used forever. But then, how many years were they actually used? In the case of the ship canal about fifty. Would they have built it then if they knew it was going to be abandoned after only fifty years of use? Somehow this brings to my mind what Fred Hoyle wrote in his book *Home is where the wind blow* that on his death bed his father asked him, "How long is the journey?".

There was a stone raised on the side of the path at the point where the canal ran parallel to the river, on the direction of the river, for one lady called Mary Moffat (1795–1871) who was an African missionary and who had inspired someone with the name David Livingstone. The canal and the river gradually diverge. I branched off to the right at one point, heading towards the river. The air was so fresh and clean when I reached the opening where there were a green field of grass, a marsh and trees rustling. At the river there is an old steel bridge with low but wide truss works on either side where you could sit dangling your feet and look at the river below. Three kids with a bicycle sat chatting with one another five yards away from me. None of us dangled his feet out over the river some twenty feet below. I walked along until I reached the Manchester Road. At the entrance there is a sign with the name Jet Amber Fields written. From there I walked a little further along the road and then reentered the Tame valley and treaded my way back until I reached the Gorton reservoir, passing a cemetery along the way on my left.

From there until the Gorton Station and then traversing Openshaw the surrounding feels less safe. You can feel the anxiety of people when they are outside their home. Public properties are not well looked after and the windows have bars. People feel suspicious walking pass you as you do walking pass them. I reached the Ashton canal again, then walked along it westward until I reached the Alan Turing road on the opposite side of which the Millennium stadium for the upcoming Common Wealth games is being built. There on the left was another brand new Asda, one of the American supermarkets in the chain of that name.

Asda's keep a very complete stock of goods and food. There policy for the location of their new stores seems to follow only one idea, that is to be as close to the most conspicuous places as possible. For example, there is another Asda in Rochdale where you could walk to from the Rochdale station and city centre. On the other hand Tesco, a British supermarket chain, uses what they call the [porcupine diagrams] to help finding a good location for their new stores. These diagrams look like stars with radiating rays whose length represent the drive time required to reach the supermarket from various places. May be it is because of this

that Tesco tends to put their supermarkets in strategic places instead of putting them in the most obvious or busiest ones as is the case with Asda. Tesco in Thailand joins force with the local Lotus and uses the name of the latter. There strategy over there is similar to here. A good example is their new supermarket at Taopuṇ in Bangkok which was opened less than a year ago.

Another supermarket chain is Aldi from Germany. It has common sense as its strategy, and the consistency in the appearance of its stores is most admirable. I once saw a newly opened Aldi while sitting on a double decker on my way from Didsbury to Manchester after having just been to a Tesco in East Didsbury with its beautiful building, and decided to jump off the bus to have a look. From East Didsbury you could easily walk to the River Mersey and from there follow the path along its bank to Stockport. There are a few places where you need to leave the path for a while and walk on a road instead. The new Aldi is on the Wilmslow Road. The one closest to the university is on the Great Western Street in Rusholme. This is a street which branches of either from the Oxford Road or the Wilmslow Road because that stretch of the road belongs to the former in one map while belongs to the latter in another. Another Aldi, on Refuge Street in Shaw, is also exactly the same as these two. Early on in 2002 they renovated the stores and put in new tillers. Starting from March 2002 the receipts are bigger and descriptive, instead of the previous terse ones.

After I entered the supermarket I had to run back to the entrance to peer out through the double automatic doors to make sure that it was not the one in Rusholme where I always go to. The consistency of products of the German is simply marvellous. Everything looks exactly the same! Not only the building and the door, but also the layout of the inside and the number of the tills, their positions, even the things put on the shelves are the same and in exactly the same position. It was quite an extraordinary experience and is one I am unlikely to forget. An Aldi supermarket looks essentially like a box which is divided by half the one part of which is a store for stocking goods while and the other the supermarket. You enter it through two automatic doors, one opening while the other is closing, on the side at the far end opposite to the store part. Similarly you leave it through a pair of automatic doors, except that this time they are at right angle instead of being in the same direction with each other.

Later I was to find out that the interior of the Aldi store in Buxton also looks exactly the same as elsewhere. The only differences are that the doors here are of sliding type where two panes meet in the middle, and there are fifty percents more vegetable. Buxton is in the Peak District

national park and I went there with students of the English classes at the University of Manchester in July.

Last night there was a party at St. Gabriel, so Shūhei is sleeping on the coach when we came to Buxton this morning. It is a pity because we passed some fine scenery in the northern part of the Peak District after Stockport. From the car park I walk to the Poole's Cavern with a group of Japanese- and Spanish students. I do not want to go into the caves, so I find my way to the Solomon Temple on the hill top overlooking the town and have my lunch there. Inside the cave it is said to be a constant seven degrees C throughout the year. It is a natural cave and so there are stalactites and stalagmites. Stone age cave-dwellers, Celts and Romans have all been here. The so-called *temple* is in fact only a low Victorian tower made possibly by mistake.

Caves are quite a normal sight in U.K. There are the Blue John Cavern and the Peak Cavern in Castleton. Also in the Peak District is the Speedwell Cavern where there is a subterranean lake, the Bottomless Pit. These caves used to be coal mines.

Some of the caves in the U.K. were used as Air Raid shelter during World War II, for example the Caves of Nottingham beneath the street of that city.

Other naturally occurred caves include the White Scar Caves in Yorkshire Dales National Park. It was discovered in 1923 by a student, Christopher Long. Inside there is the 200,000 year old Battlefield Cavern which is 330 feet long and a roof of up to 100 feet high.

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Manchester has greatly changed since 1996. When I did my master degree here in 1994–1995 the city had shrunken from its former glorious self in the Ø:19[th] Century. Back then when you talked about the Greater Manchester it made you feel like conceit, as though you were trying to make something seems what it was not. But now you can hardly feel any dividing line between the various districts of the Greater Manchester. When I came here in September 1994 I first stayed at the Salford University. Everyday when I walked from Salford to UMIST I went from one town to another. It could not be otherwise. The streets in between were very quiet you worried for your personal safety simply walking. Buildings were deserted or unoccupied.

You never wanted to stray from the main roads, even these did not feel safe enough let alone the side streets and alleys. I never saw the canals. Nobody went near them, let alone taking a leisure to walk along them. I did not know about the Roman remains and Castle Field. These must have been hidden inside the maze of deserted alleys I dared not penetrate. By no means I was alone in this opinion. Most students I had

met laughingly joked to one another, wondering why on earth they came here to study as, 'There's nothing here,' we usually said. I met Sabrina in Thailand at a party a few months before coming to Manchester for the first time. When she told me that she was studying the piano at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester I asked her what the city was like, and she said, 'It's very nice. I like it.' That gives me assurance. One day in Manchester I met her with her piano teacher at her college, the RNCM. I often went there to use the library, which was then upstairs. She introduced me to her teacher who then asked me why I chose to come to study in Manchester. After hearing my reply, that it was Sabrina who told me this was a very nice city, she turned her eyes reproachingly at her saying, 'Did your really said that?' 'Why?', Sabrina said, 'I think it is a very nice city.'

I never comprehended why the name *Greater Manchester*, since, I thought to myself, different towns are different towns and there's no need to exaggerate or try to make something sound more important than it really was. Gorton was already another town, not to mention Bolton, Stockport or Altrincham. But since the IRA bombing near the Arndale Centre in 1996, the city has been growing so quickly. No matter where you go now there are no broken lines of houses. No where now is deserted as it used to be in 1995, and Manchester implies the Greater Manchester you no longer need to use the name.

Manchester was in its heyday in the Ø:19[th] century. Within three decades, from 1801 to 1831, its population increased from 77,000 to 187,000. Opposition to the Tories grew after the *Peterloo Massacre* where twelve protestors died. The Reform Act passed in 1832 brought about home grown Member of Parliaments as well as more votes. The Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association, formed in 1838, led to the national Anti-Corn Law League and the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846 which removed the tax imposed on imported grain.

Among the world's firsts, lending libraries was begun in 1852 in Campfield, Manchester.

There are 33 wards in Manchester, each elects three councillors. Each councillor serves for four years. The thirty-three wards are namely Ardwick, Baguley, Barlow Moor, Benchill, Beswick and Clayton, Blackley, Bradford, Brooklands, Burnage, Central, Charlestown, Cheetham, Chorlton, Crumpsall, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Gorton North, Gorton South, Harpurhey, Hulme, Levenshulme, Lightbowne, Longsight, Moss Side, Moston, Newton Heath, Northenden, Old Moat, Rusholme, Sharston, Whalley Range, Withington, and Wookhouse Park. This means that Salford, Stockport, Rochdale, Bolton and other towns in the Greater Manchester are not among the wards and thus probably have their own

city councils.

Where the Manchester Aquatics Centre now stands was in 1994 only a grassy patch of ground. This and the Management School building next to it came up while I was away. When I lived at the Grosvenor Place I did not realise at first that one could use the resident card to swim there. At a party at the St. Peters House one evening I learnt about this from a German girl, and thereafter I went to swim every week. We swam in the training pool, which is in the basement. The pools for public and competition are on the ground floor. Once after my swim I watched a diving competition upstairs. Particularly good were the wining twins, small girls from China whose synchronisation seems so natural and covers every movements to the minute details, not only during the diving but also while walking towards the end of the diving platform. Even their breathing was in tune. After I have moved into the Sir Charles Grove I swam less often, and I went swimming once in November, three times in December, twice in January, once in February and again in May. It now costs one pound fifty with a student card.

I only realise now how often I have shopped at Kwik Save at Rusholme. Kwik Save belongs to Somerfield Store Limited whose head office is in Bristol. Before this I always bought my foods at Aldi, also in Rusholme, because it is closer to walk and because it is cheaper than elsewhere. I can not say that I am well-to-do. It is enough for me to be able to live comfortably, if only I can do this I do not want to be rich. I live a simple life and cut everything down to the bare necessity. The foods that I buy tend to be the same things over and over again. I know it is not good for your health. I know it is necessary to have a wider range of diet, but it is difficult to change your habit. I buy flour to bake bread and make pizzas. I have canned sardines with spaghetti and pastas. I have oats or cereals with milk, and I have Marmite on toast. In New Zealand I remember that I never could eat Marmite, but now I just love it. Also, over there I think Marmite is always made from beef while Vegemite vegetables, but here the Marmite I eat is made from vegetables. Sometimes I make okonomiyaki in its simplest version and have this with mayonnaise. Plain oats used to be much cheaper in 1994. Now it costs almost the same as other kinds of cereals, for instance Swiss mueselli and cornflakes. Sterilised milk comes in paper cartons and does not taste as nice as pasteurised milk, which comes in plastic containers. The cheapest bread, from either Kwik Save or Aldi, costs 19 pence a pound. For bake beans, the cheapest is 9 pence. As for beans, I still prefer the Japanese nattō. No one knows how to cook beans better than the Japanese and the Chinese.

Lamb is imported from New Zealand, and so are the Kiwi fruits. Frozen

peas, cabbages, cucumber, tomatoes, mushrooms, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli and courgettes for the vegetables, pears, peaches, nectarines, strawberries, apples, oranges, and the Kiwi fruits for the fruits are among the items that appear in my shopping lists. I only bought lamb from New Zealand once, that was on Ø:21[st] January when I was living at the Sir Charles Grove Hall of Residence, and that was only because Dirk was coming over to visit and I knew he had lived in New Zealand. Then we forgot to cook it and as a result we only had coffee.

In this age of multimedia and telecommunication I use neither credit cards nor mobile phones. Mobile phone I have used when I was in Japan. It was called PHS, perhaps short for Personal Hand Set. The system is unique in Japan. You can not use it anywhere else in the world. It is a very efficient system and when wrapped up the one that I used must have been about two inches wide and two and a half inches long.

In Manchester you can go anywhere by only following a canal. It is more amazing than Venice in that this is almost as inland as you could get anywhere on the British Isles. It is not on or in the sea like Venice where water is plenty. All the canals here were dug and they are filled with fresh water. Locks are numerous and in one mile you can expect between ten to fifteen of them. Each one has two gates, one at each of its two ends, and is wide enough for a barge to enter one at a time. They work like stairs in the houses or steps and essentially use water pressure to raise or lower the ships or barges. Though both are filled with water less amount of water is needed for the working of a canal than that of a river. A canal with locks is like a river with dams. The difference lies in that there are less dams to a river than locks to a canal. Also a dam built for hydro-electricity have a higher head, that is to say, the difference between the levels of the water on both sides of it. A lock is more like a weir than a dam. To be able for them to work smoothly there has to be enough water between two consecutive locks. The exact amount needed depends on the capacity of the two locks in question. If two locks are very close to each other the canal between them has to be widened in order to let it hold more water, which makes it look more like a lake.

There is usually only one lock at each point along a canal for boats heading in both directions. When not in use, both gates of a lock are closed. On approaching a gate, one person will jump of the boat, open one gate to let it in, close the gate behind him, open the gate on the other side and then move the boat out. As the second gate is opened, the level of the water under the boat will rapidly change and anyone standing on the boat will feel like he is standing in a lift, being either raised up or lowered down to wherever the new level may be. If you travel on a boat this is simple, when you approach a lock you open a gate, get in, close

the gate behind you, then open another gate and get out. You also need to lock both gates behind you before you go. The locks are long bolts without handles, so you would need to have a key with a long handle to wind the bolt lock or unlock.

You can go everywhere by the canal. The Rochdale canal goes from the very top of the Greater Manchester to the city centre. The numbers of the locks start in the north and increase as they approach Manchester. The one just before the city centre is number 82. Locks 80 and 81 are so close to each other – less than 100 metres apart – so the section of the canal lying between them widens into a round shape like a lake in order to increase the volume of the water. At the Gay Village a part of it must have been filled in to make some pubs and a car park. Here you need to come up from the canal to the road and walk along the canal through the Gay Village. Thereafter you can walk along the canal all the way to Castle Field. The Oxford Road Lock is numbered 88 while the one at Castle Field 92.

The Rochdale Canal ends here in Castle Field, but from here the Bridgewater Canal goes all the way to the Salford Quays which is not far from the Manchester United Stadium in Old Trafford. Once you can see the stadium, turn right on to the Throstle Nest Bridge to cross over the canal to the road on the opposite side. Scramble down a rough path or a hole in the thick vegetation to get to the Ship Canal. On 11^{th} July 2002 I was there along my way to the newly opened Imperial War Museum the rough had been cleared so that the entrance to the path is now clearly visible, but the hole was still there. The Manchester Ship Canal passes under the Trafford Road Bridge.

I walked along the canal again three days later. It was Sunday and the weather was perfect. Shūhei asked me in the morning what I was going to do today, and I told him I wanted to walk northwards to as far as possible.

On the left hand side, on leaving the city, is the Royal Mill was first built in 1797 and rebuilt in 1912. It is now in total dilapidation and the windows are all broken. It is connected to another mill, the Union Mill, across a lane by a walkway above. Further up at Gate 77 the path is no longer covered with running water, for the draining tube which used to flood it now pours into the canal. After the Church Street there one mill is being worked upon on the other side. Old wooden planks have been ripped off the floor and stuck out in bunches through every window, it is quite a sight to see. Then there is a diversion of the tow path because of a bridge construction, and then Lock 66. Lock 65 after the bend divides industries from the nature. Even children you meet from here on seem better behaved and saner compared with city-bred brats. The

underwater plants, water plants, lotus, and tall grass along both banks will all probably disappear once the canal is opened for the boats and barges again.

Here you start to see houses with the back yard opening on to the canal. The distance between locks lengthens. The M60 has now become a ring road surrounding both Manchester and Salford, whereas before 2000 it only completed three-quarter of the circuit. The new stretch goes from the Middleton Road in Middleton to the Manchester Road in Denton. Here at White Gate it becomes parallel with the Rochdale canal and crosses it in that fashion, while the latter runs through a tunnel formed underneath it. You can not follow along the canal into the tunnel, but have to come up to the surface and cross over the noisy M60. The footpath bridge which leads you across is completely wrapped up to form a wide tube the top and the sides of which are well opened, which makes it quite breezy and pleasant inside the tube. I can not see why the tow path should not go under the road instead.

The Rochdale Canal is managed by British Waterways, North West Region which also manages many other canals including the Lancaster, Leed & Liverpool, Caldon, Macclesfield, Shropshire Union, Llangollen, Montgomery, Huddersfield Narrow and Pead Forest Canals, River Weaver and Millennium Ribble Link. These canals date back 200 years and cover 600 miles. The reopening of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal in May 2001 marked the success of the *mission impossible*, for the canal includes the Standedge Tunnel which is the longest, deepest and highest canal tunnel in the U.K. The tunnel was completed in 1811 and is 3 miles long, 645 feet above sea level and 638 feet below the surface. And when the Rochdale Canal's restoration is finally completed in 2002, the South Pennine Ring, established since 1^{st} April 2000 , will come into being and will consist of the Ashton, Manchester, Bolton and Burry Canals, the Northern section of the Peak Forest Canal, as well as the Rochdale and the Huddersfield Narrow Canal already mentioned.

The Lancaster Canal may not be the most spectacular to travel along in a boat but it certainly gives you the least hassle among all canals since it has a 41 mile stretch from Preston to Tewitfield with no locks. Another canal, the Millennium Ribble Canal opening in 2002, which is the first canal to built in England since the 19^{th} century will connect it with the rest of the canal network. The Leeds & Liverpool Canal, with its 127 miles, is the longest canal in Britain. It contains the staircase locks at Bingley Five Rise and averages 1.5 miles between locks.

Sometimes a rise is not enough and you need a boat lift. The Anderson Boat Lift is one of these boat lifts. It was built in 1875 and it reopens in 2002.

The Bridgewater Canal was built by the third Duke of Bridgewater, or rather by James Brindley his engineer who has also built the first British canal at Sankey in Warrington. It began carrying coal from collieries in Worsley to Castlefield in 1761.

The last stretch which completed the M60 ring was completed in October 2000 and costed £250 million. Industrial and business parks come up along this ring road like mushrooms. There are the Tameside Park, Northbank Industrial Estate, and Waterside Park. Other business quarters come up because of regeneration, for instance the Centenary Park and Dock g because of the regeneration of Salford Quays.

Manchester Science Park must have been the first one among these. It was established as early as 1984 as a joint venture between the University of Manchester, UMIST, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester City Council. It is also close to M60. I remember it was very quiet in 1995. Sometimes I ventured that way, but hardly found a soul even on weekdays that I felt scared. Back then you never stray away from the main roads.

The Imperial War Museum here is the first one of its kind outside the Southeast. It is designed by Daniel Libeskind. He designed it in the shape of broken shards. Imagine the globe is broken into pieces and these pieces randomly join one another and you have this museum or something similar. One such shard stands tall above the rest which houses a tower and a high and eerie platform. The main theme inside the museum is about peace in line with the international theme but which is unique for the U.K. because in other Imperial War Museum's you have more weapons and less tragedies.

The Air Shard at the museum has the 55 metre high tower which leans at four degrees. The Water Shard is a restaurant with a good panoramic view of the Manchester Ship Canal and the Lowry on the other side. The Earth Shard contains the Main Exhibition where there are six silos containing displays of the various themes, Experience of War, Women and War, Impressions of War, Empire and Commonwealth and War, Science and Technology and War, and Legacy of War. It is well designed in a way that there are just enough things on exhibition to convey all the ideas without the place being cluttered. There are also six time lines, namely 1900–1914, 1914–1918, 1919–1938, 1939–1945, 1946–1990, and 1990–present. The things on display in-between silos are Harrier Jump-jet, Artillery piece, Fire-fighting Trailer, Trabant Estate Car, T34 Russian Tank. I have seen the real Trabant running as well as being stacked up in thousands, back in 1990.

L. S. Lowry (1887–1976) was an artist of Manchester. His paintings are pure but filled with loneliness as that was what made him paint. He

said, 'I started of a painting having got no idea in mind what it is going to look like.'

Sportcity is being built in East Manchester which costs 77 million pound of lottery fund. It is designed by Arup and built by Laing. After the Games, it will become the stadium for the Manchester City Football Club which, for more than 80 years, has been at Maine Road. There is another 77 million pound from the Prime minister Tony Blair for regeneration, jobs and housing of East Manchester. Construction works are now going on everywhere in the city. There is a 500 million pound project to build Metrolink from Piccadilly to Ashton-under-Lyne via the stadium, to the Airport, and to Rochdale via Oldham. The stadium has shades held up like a wobbling windscreen shade by cables from the tips of twelve arrows all around it. Four arrows on both sides poise on coiled springs made up of ramps leading to the spectator seats.

The John Rylands Library at Deansgate has obtained nearly 300,000 pound of the Heritage Lottery Fund. Its collection is divided into numerous different archives

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In a few days it will be the Commonwealth Games here in Manchester. New buildings are still cropping up like mushrooms, though half of them are in reality the renovation works of existing buildings. Some buildings are lucky and saved, some less so and perishes. The Free Trade Hall was unique in this matter. I think they are going to rescue only half of it, that is the front part. The Hallé orchestra used to play their concerts here but has now moved to the new Bridgewater Hall. The front part of the Free Trade Hall is curved like a tube while the rear part looks like a box. But the stacco figures of men on top of the rear wall looked plain but simple. They were either destroyed to pieces recently, or were removed for keep somewhere else. I hope the latter is the case because I like those reliefs. It was a pity I never took a picture of them when they were still there. Who would have imagined that our values can differ greatly from one person to another. I think they may plan to build an extension to the front part after the demolition of the rear, something that will contrast with it. Charles Hallé began giving his concerts at the Free Trade Hall in 1858.

Last month another glass-clad building has been opened. The Urbis is literally a blue building covered all over in rectangular pieces of glass It is shaped like the wedge that you put on the floor to prop a door open. It is, interestingly, a museum of cities. Manchester is the world's first industrialised city because the industrialisation took root here, and with it the labour movement. It is not difficult to imagine that whenever the Conservative party rules the city will fall from use into neglect. I

think it has been a silent strategy of Tony Blair to bring Manchester back abreast with its former glory during the 19th Century. The 17th Common Wealth Games coming up this month seems to be a part of this plan. Many reasons lead me to think that this will be the city that links England and the UK to Europe and the rest of the world. I began to see polices patrolling the streets on horse backs last year, a sight which you do not normally see except in some chosen areas in London. The trams here are called 'Metro' as undergrounds in Europe, and the name is also used as the name of the daily newsletter of the transportation networks of Greater Manchester.

The Urbis is open everyday. The admission price for one adult is five pounds. It's brochure tells us to think of the city as a vast, living organism, which is fair enough, but then it says, 'Select your crime, choose your city and receive your sentence, with the world's only automatic law dispenser.' The museum is based on the stories of Manchester, Los Angeles, Paris, Sao Paolo, Singapore, and Tokyo. I do not see any reason why it would not include the story of New York here, unless that this is after the 11th September 2001. Terrorism makes you feel your life is so short. But ironically, for an onlooker at least, events like the 11th September bombings of the World Trade Center make one feels that life is long, in a sense that many things have happened between then and now. Many innocents have been killed, many a revenge, more innocent victims, and history turns its courses before our eyes. I have not been inside the Urbis, but from the pamphlets it is obvious that there are people in Sao Paolo who commute in helicopters, in 1880s Londontown was built in Tokyo,and Singapore was founded by Stanford Raffles in 1819 to be the Manchester of the East.

Manchester Ship Canal brings cargo ships 56 kilometres from Liverpool to Salford docks. The largest of these was Carchester which carried 14,000 tonnes of grain to Trafford Park. It was opened by Queen Victoria in May 1894, and at one time used to carry five per cent of British trade. Most canals now have fallen into disuse and become solely for leisure businesses, except the Manchester Ship Canal which still handles more than seven million tonnes per annum which includes the one million tonnes for its upper reaches between Warrington and Manchester.

The opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games is fabulous. The whole stadium looked at from above seems like a spaceship. A Kiwi performs Haka in front of the Queen and at the end there are shows one of which is called *Spirit of Manchester* where there are sounds of thunder and lightnings flash from one end of the spaceship to another. Kirsty Howard gives the baton back to the queen. She is a girl who was born with her hearth back to front and has to have oxygen tubes permanently

stuck into her nose. The queen descends some flight of steps down to where she is, then climbs back up again to get to the podium to make her speech. Yesterday the baton arrived at the town hall and there were music and fireworks there. I strolled there to have a look. The Albert Square was filled with people. In front of the Town Hall there were two rows of flags on long poles and lots of flowers. There will be festivals at various places in the city everyday during the games.

The Commonwealth Games are held once every four years. The first games were played at Hamilton, Ontario, in 1930 where 400 athletes from 11 countries participated. There were no games in 1942 and 1946 because of the War. From 1934 on they were held at London, Sydney, Auckland, Vancouver, Cardiff, Perth, Kingston, Edinburgh, Christchurch, Edmonton, Brisbane, Edinburgh again, Auckland, Victoria, and finally in 1998 at Kuala Lumpur. They have never been hosted in Africa. This year the only sport which is not played in Manchester is shooting which is held in Bisley, Surrey. The next games will be in Melbourne. Before this it used to be called British Empire Games, British Empire and Commonwealth Games, and British Commonwealth Games. England, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales play against one another in these games, even though in the Olympics they are the same team.

The Games were called the British Empire Games from 1930 to 1950, then the British Empire and Commonwealth Games until 1962, the British Commonwealth Games from 1966 to 1974, and then simply the Commonwealth Games from 1978 on. Team sports were included for the first time in 1998 in Kuala Lumpur. So the All Black is here in Manchester. But before 1998 relays must have already been competed, and in a way these also are team sports. For this year you have to know names like Kate Anderson and Ian Thorpe.

The latter is also known as Ian *Thorpedo* Thorpe because of the speed of his swimming. He is unassailable in medium distance free-style in which he wins six gold medals here. He also aims for another gold in his experimental back-stroke, but comes out with a silver. According to Charlie, he is a *freak* with his size-17 feet. In a TV interview he said that his flipper feet make him tired quicker than others. But, having watched him swimming, I realise that it must be his hands that tire him more than his feet; he puts them too close to the centre line above his head. With this, it would be difficult for him to compete in long distance categories, for example the 1,500 metre. He has a similar problem with his backstroke, except that now it is worse than before. Now one of his hands, I think the right one, actually crosses this straight line extending from the top of his head. It will definitely tire and drag him, unless I am

mistaken.

I enjoy watching the All Black play. It's good that they could play in the Commonwealth Games. They make rugby seem such a classic act to watch, and all the other teams barbarous in comparison. In the Games, it is Rugby 7 they play, whatever that means.

Both the marathon and the triathlon are outdoor events. You don't need a ticket and I watched them live. At the marathon, people lined the streets the whole last mile before the Sportcity stadium. The triathlon was competed at Salford Quays. I was a bit worried for the contenders because the water in the ship canal may not be clean. I remember having seen a sign there which says, 'Hazard! Untreated water. No swimming.' But I guess it doesn't matter if you don't do it regularly and in such public event as this, though Penny did give me round eyes when I told her about the sign.

When swimmers swim towards you they seem hardly moving. Looking at from the top of Detroit Bridge at the Quays they seem mere tiny spots, so insignificant. It is better if you watch from the banks, because then you see them sideway and they move quicker that way. The best thins is to see them broadcasted. The close-up by the zoom lenses make them much more impressive to watch.

There is a ferry which takes people from one side of the canal to another for free on the day of the triathlon. The Lowry Footbridge is closed off except to the competitors.

America is not among the Commonwealth nations, and that surprises me a great deal. 'Why is America not here in the Commonwealth Games?', I query Steve. 'No idea,' he says, 'May be they fought for their independence, that's why?' On which I brood, 'But India fought for their independence too. And Australia is in the Commonwealth. What's the difference?' 'May be they are too big,' I carry on, 'Perhaps if they come they would come as fifty countries instead of one, like England, Wales and Scotland of the U.K.?' It could be because America fought its way out of the British Empire, and the Commonwealth Games used to be called the British Empire Games. May be that's why. Or it could be that not all the fifty states of the U.S. belonged to the British Empire; some of them were French territories.

Visitors who come to during the Games and those who take part in it see only harmony. The English, however, are trapped within their own history and thus silently embroiled over the issue on the national level. The Greater Manchester represents Labour's values while the Greater London Conservative's. The games have justified a huge amount of capital flows into the city as well as the regeneration of what used to be some of the worst corners to live in in the U.K., take for example Moss Side. In

the press release of this Queen's Golden Jubilee Year, Manchester is only mentioned once when it says that the Queen visits the Jewish Museum here. Manchester was actively involved with the Puritan during the Civil War as well as with the Jacobite in the 18th century. Queen Victoria did not like the statue of Oliver Cromwell when she came here in 1867 to unveil the statue of her husband Prince Albert. A few years later Abel Heywood the mayor had to open the new town hall himself because she would not come.

The statue of Oliver Cromwell had been moved from the city centre to Wythenshawe Park where is now stands. The Wythenshawe Hall in the park belonged to the Tatton family for nearly four centuries. It was built in 1540 by Robert Tatton. Another Robert Tatton defended his home as a royalist, against Cromwell's troops. For three months they laid siege to the Hall. Two cannons were brought from Manchester for the purpose, and Tatton escaped to join the King at Chester. After the Civil War the Wythenshawe estate expanded to about 2,500 acres. Then in 1924 Robert Henry Greville Tatton sold the estate lands. The Hall and 250 acres were bought and donated to the city. The Wythenshawe Hall is one of the four galleries collectively called Manchester City Galleries. The others are Manchester Art Gallery, Gallery of Costume in Platt Field, and Heaton Hall.

§

Conwy is a small town in the north of Wales. It stands at the estuary of the Conwy River. I go there with students of the English classes. You can nearly walk around the town on top of the wall which leads to the Conwy Castle. The castle was built in 1287 under the order of King Edward I. You can walk across the town in fifteen minutes. Outside the wall are fields and forests.

Not far from Conwy is Llandudno, a great place because of the Great Orme. From the promenade along the North Shore I walk along Gloddaeth Avenue to the other promenade along the West Shore. Then I start to walk along the road that encircles the promontory. At one point I break off from the road to the right where there is a path leading up the slope. Already the view is magnificent, and I can see the sea below and a piece of land far away. The path leads to an opening where you have a panoramic view of the sea. It is windy up here. I also meet a few people, so it must be a well-known place after all, though I discovered it all by myself because I have neither read about it nor picked up any brochure before I climbed up here, since the Tourist Information in Llandudno was closed for lunch.

I decide to walk on, for I think there must be a way to go around the cape and to the North Shore. The path is very scenic. Along the way

there is this breath-taking view to my left, and to my right the plateau and peaks of the Great Orme. I walk pass some tents and a few people camping.

I must have reached the other opposite side of the promontory to that which I started from. Below there is a road that winds adventurously on top of the cliffs. At one point along the road I see what looks like a faked castle, with its crenellated wall, overlooking the waves below breaking on the rocks from the top of the cliff where it sits.

The way after this becomes more and more obscure. Sometimes plants on both sides overgrow and meet each other in the middle of the path, so that they brush against my body as I walk straight into them. The further I walk along, the less like a path it becomes. Further up fifty yards to the right some people are talking and laughing, so there must be an easier path up there. But I do not know how I could get up there where they are, so I trudge along until the path comes to its definite end further from where there is a drop to the sea of overgrowth below. Farther away I can see a village and a cemetery.

There is no question about going further from here, so I turn back and retrace the steps I made. After a while, the path becomes unfamiliar and so I realise that this must be a different way from the one by which I came. Finally I reach the path up there where I heard people shouting and laughing earlier. It goes straight on along a stone wall. I meet one couple, and upon my asking the way the man says that this is the way to get back to Llandudno, so I thank him and start along it without ceremony. I pass under a cable car carrying people up from the town. Then comes a climb down the a sheer drop, and I scramble down it. Once at the bottom, there is a road on the other side of which is a park, and so the paths greatly improves and are easier. Soon a tarmacked road is reached, and after that the Pier and the beach of the North Shore.

The pier is Victorian and is over 2,000 feet long. The crescent of North Shore is forever crowded in summer. On the other side of it is the Little Orme, but there is no time to go there. I find my way through the crowd and barely have enough time to walk to the car park where our coaches are waiting. I am lucky to be exactly on time. The Great Orme has added another dimension into my life. I feel myself changed after having seen it. But I nearly have missed my coach. If I came back half an hour later than this Aoife would surely have left me behind. The Great Orme is a huge outcrop of rocks which slant in layers down from north-east to south-west, which is why it was a gentle slope on the way up for me but a scramble down a precipice down the other side.

There are many interesting castles in Wales, more than there are in England. With this and the widespread use of the written Welsh lan-

guage, the country seems to be more European than England is. There are castles at Beaumaris, Caernarfon, Conwy, Criccieth, Denbigh, Dolbadarn, Dolwyddelan, and Harlech. These castles played the most active role during the war between Wales and England in the thirteenth century at the time of King Edward I. Cricieth Castle was first built by Llywelyn the Great between 1230 and 1240. His brother, Dafydd ap Gruffudd who ruled at Denbigh, was killed by Edward I during the latter's campaigns against Wales. The name of Denbigh Castle in Welsh is Castell Dinbych. There Master James of St. George, and architect of King Edward I, was also responsible for the new castle.

Dolwyddelan Castle sits deep in Snowdonia. It was built between 1210 and 1240, again by Llywelyn the Great. The castle fell to Edward I's force in 1283, the same year that Denbigh Castle did.

The Harlech Castle is a World Heritage Inscribed site. It was built by Edward I to keep the Welsh at bay in Snowdonia. In 1404 it was taken by Owain Glyn Dŵr who later held a parliament there.

§

York was built by the Romans in 71 AD, and used to be called Eboracum then. Constantine the Great, who built Constantinople, became the Roman Emperor here in 306 AD. The present name of the city came from the Vikings, who derived it from Jorvik or Yorwik, the name of their flourishing kingdom. The York Minster is the largest medieval structure in the United Kingdom. It is the fourth minster built on the site the first one of which stood here in Ø:7[th] century. The building of the present minster started in 1220 and finished in 1472, a span of more than 250 years.

York is in Yorkshire whose symbol is a white rose, while Manchester is in Lancashire whose symbol is a red rose. On Ø:10[th] August the pre-sessional English classes go there, and I with them. Eva is a little jumpy today. John says that she dreamt three days ago that the coach left without her, so she keeps telling the driver times and again, 'Don't ever leave without me!' I think she has been working too hard. She is still young, and when in the previous trips some of the students were late and she had to say that the coach would have to leave without them, I think she felt the stress more than us. Those people who were actually late, however, were the luckiest of all, who do not experience any stress, since they never heard any such remark.

We go there together in three coaches. The coach I am in belongs to Belle Vue. May be that is the name of a company. It used to be the name of a zoo situated between Gorton and Manchester. On board it is, 'No food. No drink. No smoking'. I think to myself, 'What if the sign should have said instead, "No food, no drink. No smoking, no food"?'

Then, I think, it would have meant that unless we smoke, there would be no drink!

In York there is the York Minster, a large medieval Gothic cathedral that is so tall that one must see unless if one is not blind. Here stood a wooden church built for Edwin the Anglo-Saxon king who became a Christian through his wife Ethelberga. Here again a Norman cathedral was started in 1080 which took twenty years to build. This latter cathedral was rebuilt in the present form in 1220 and consecrated in 1472. The 128 stained glass windows here date back to between 12^{th} and 20^{th} century.

The city walls here were built during the 13^{th} and 14^{th} centuries and the remaining three quarters of them are very well preserved. On top of each gate there is a shop which sells odd things. There is a poem printed on a sheet, said to be written by some lady of ninety-two who says that she is constantly attended in her old age by two gentlemen who compete with each other; the first one, 'Will Power gets me going in the morning'; while the second, 'Arthur Ritis never leaves me alone.' There is no need for a vicar to tell her to start thinking about the after-life since she is old; she always ask herself, for instance, every time she goes into a kitchen, 'What am I here after?' Another sheet contains a nun's prayer a part of which runs, 'to be helpful, but not bossy.'

King's Manor belongs to the University of York since 1963, and now houses the Department of Archaeology. Henry VIII, Charles I and James I all had stayed here. Around 1270 a house was built here as residence of Abbot of St. Mary's Abbey. In 1539 there was a dissolution of the Monasteries, and from then until 1641 it housed both the Council of North as well as its President. In the Museum Gardens close by there are ruins of the Norman church, a Benedictine abbey founded in 1080 and dissolved by Henry VIII and subsequently plundered. In the garden there is a tree planted for Charles Allen (1887–1972) who was a botanist.

The roads around York form a double ring system where A1237 is the outer ring, but the inner ring. Outer rings around cities have junctions whereas inner rings have intersections. The difference between these two is that junctions are made up of loops, flyovers, or tunnels, and therefore have no traffic light.

Built by the Romans were the first city walls parts of which still remain. William the Conqueror built a castle after he won the city in 1069. The moats around the city walls now are all filled up and dry. On the sides of turrets there are slits in the shape of a cross which are widened out on the inside to allow easy access to the openings so that arrows can be shot from them to cover a wide angle outside the walls. I walk up and down the steps which lead up to the turret on the east of the city. Between

the walls on both sides is a space just wide enough for one person to pass through. The lower parts of the wall reach up to your waist when you walk on top along the walls. There are smaller turrets at strategic locations and at the corners of the city walls. At these places also there is sometimes a tiny turret only large enough for one small person to fit in. Most of these are cylindrical in shape, with walls covering them nearly all around except for the opening in the back to allow a soldier to get in. At one of these, however, the wall completely surround it and the only way you can get in to watch from the slit is to climb into it through the opening on top! The walls of the battlements are crenellated at a wide interval.

At one point just outside the wall there is a kiln, a half sphere with an access tunnel on one side. For all I can imagine, it could have been used as a bakery as well as a kiln.

The Pavement is here since 1378. Here Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland was beheaded 22^{nd} August 1572 and an effigy of Oliver Cromwell was burnt in 1660 at the restoration of King Charles II. There are roundabouts and fun parks everywhere. Is this not indeed another Blackpool? The St. Andrew Society of York was founded in a coffee house on 7^{th} December 1894 .

I walk to the National Railway Museum on Leeman Street. It is a big museum which gives an excellent history of trains. There is a real carriage of the Japanese Shinkansen bullet train in which you can sit and watch video. The speed of Mallard in 1938 exceeded 120 mph. There is a turntable 70 feet in diameter which was once used to turn the engines around. Stationary winding engines use rope haulage to pull trains up a gradient as steep as one in eight.

Rails are flat bottomed steel bars, at one in twenty inclination, on which runs the railway wheel. The wheel has a raised outside edge on the side toward the axle called flange which holds the wheel in place when it turns. The rail is connected to the foot by the web which has a cross-section narrower than its own. The foot is fit on the base plate made of cast iron. This in turn rests upon the sleeper which is a beam made of wood or nowadays pre-stressed concrete. As for the track gauge, which is the separation between the rails, the Great Western and other Western County railways used a gauge of seven feet and a quarter inches. George and Robert Stephenson used a gauge of four feet eight and a half inches, which was recommended in 1846 by a Royal Commission on Railway Gauge and has become standard. The last broad gauge ran in 1892.

There is also the replica of Stephenson's Rocket, the real thing of which was built in 1829. On the way back our driver points out to one gentleman a plot of farm where the motorways diverge to enclose it on both sides.

The location is awkward because the owner of the farm would not sell, so they built the motorways around it in such a way that it would be impossible for him to sell it now, unless it were to make a petrol station. Towards the left is the Sutherland moor.

§

The following week we go to Blackpool. This is the second time I go there. Everyone who has never been to Blackpool is always held in disbelieve when he sees it for the first. It is nothing like anything else in England. Vera gives me round eyes when I see her after the trip. Fortunately Jesús drank too much at a Spanish party last night, so he is spared the surprise today. I see him playing football on the grass at St. Gabriel Hall in the afternoon when we come back.

I go with Anh and Duc from Vietnam and Madoka from Japan. All of us go to the beach first. We take our shoes off and take lots of pictures. I only like the part of Blackpool on this side of the promenade. On the other side it is completely different. Things for children and things for weird adults exist side by side here in Blackpool, but at the piers on this side of the promenade there are only fun things for children.

§

The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life. I read that somewhere on our trip the following week to Chester. Here there are Roman remains which include an Amphitheatre with the original wall ten metre high and could contain 7,000 spectators. There is nothing new on Earth; now we have stadiums instead of amphitheatres and sportsmen instead of gladiators.

During the Civil War of 1642–6 King Charles I was here and the city was besieged for 18 months by the Parliamentarian forces.

§

Bike Away is the word. In Manchester nowadays you could go on your bicycle to a train station, leave it there in a locker to get on a train to go to work and be sure that it will still be there when you return in the evening. Sixty-six such lockers are being installed at many stations. You only need to pay a returnable deposit which according to a pamphlet is twenty pounds but which I remember having seen written on those lockers at the Stockport bus terminal as ten pounds. Some of the lockers are tall, like those in Stockport, and you put your bicycle in in an upright position.

§

I always bake bread these days since I have bought a can of dried yeast and want to use it all before I move. Apart from dried yeast, bread can also be made from fresh yeast, but this I have never seen. You put the

dried yeast, which comes in powder, into lukewarm water, generally a mixture of one part boiling water and two parts cold water, in a bowl and leave it in a warm place for ten to fifteen minutes by the end of which it will grow into a culture, all frothy. After that you mix the yeast culture with flour, add some herbs and salt if you wish, and then knead everything into a dough. You leave the dough for half an hour to one hour and then bake it in the oven at gas mark five for fifteen minutes, then turn it over and bake further for another five minutes.

I normally put the yeast mixture to culture on top of the cupboard in our kitchen, 'Otherwise somebody might throw it away because he might think it's some kind of dirty froth,' I answer the look from one girl friend of Ian my flat mate. 'That's how it looks,' I show her the culture which is starting to expand in rings. It is an amazing sight to watch it grows before your eyes. 'Basically you put the dried yeast into a warm solution of sugar until it grows into a living culture all alive and kicking,' I explain to her. 'Then you mix the culture with flour and make it into a dough,' I continue seeing that she is interested. 'After that you put the dough into the oven and in doing so you kill all the yeast at once,' she looks at me questioningly. 'You gas them all,' I explain, then seeing her bewildered look I feel somewhat guilty because I think I have gone too far in my explanation. 'I will have to stop thinking about the yeast,' I tell her, 'otherwise I won't be able to become a baker.' She smiles, which somewhat encourages me and I continue, 'You make a culture of yeast and then you obliterate the whole culture in one go.' She looks uneasy again, which makes me feel guilty. 'Every cook book tells you to preheat the oven before baking the bread,' I turn the direction of my analogy, 'Now I think I know the reason why. It is to make it quicker for the yeast.' With the smile still on her face she blushes so much that I panic and then wailingly says, 'Ooh! murderer!' I will never make a good baker.

§

Our life is a stepping from one disappointment to another. Today I ruined the whole slide film trying to develop it myself. It is sad to think that most of the slides I took on my trips with the English classes are gone. After I realised that it has happened, I fell off from the window sill in my room while trying to clip the film up on the curtain rail for it to dry. I fell backward and hit the mirror with the back of my head so that a corner of it broke off. Elaine says it is seven years of bad luck if you break a mirror. I have just had my seven years of bad luck nearly to the date. This is September 2002, and I started my bad luck from the time I finished my master degree in September 1995.

This is one of those events which break my heart. The first one I re-

member was when I knew for the first time that I would have to wear eye glasses. The second time was when I had been disqualified in the university entrance exams in Thailand for having re-applied without cancelling the first offer. That was in 1985. The third time was in 1990 when I was robbed of all my belongings including memorabilia I held dear in Warsaw. And the fourth time a month later when Ace left me, which left me broken heart for nearly seven years. This time I have not cried, which is unusual, though I wish I had. I feel terrible the morning after the incident, so I do not get up until more than two hours after I woke up. Then I dream, just before waking up for the second time, that I wash the damaged film with water and there come up colours and pictures. Our brain has the potential to cope with losses.

§

I shall never know how much the bus to the airport cost because it never costs me the same twice and it costs differently depending on whether I go to the airport or come from it. Today a lady got up on the bus where I was sitting and said, 'Withington!', was told the price; whereby she paid and then said, 'It is never the same when I ask'. Sometimes people say the amount of money to the bus driver instead of telling him the intended destination.

§

Gallery Oldham is a nice gallery in Oldham. I like galleries when there are not that many people inside. I prefer the Manchester Art Gallery in 1994 when fewer people visited it, to nowadays when it is bustling with crowds. At the Gallery Oldham there is on display a panorama taken in 1879 by Knott. The picture shows predominantly mill chimneys, Victorian flat houses, and the railway lines. The railway to Oldham was planned in 1827, reached Oldham Werneth in 1842, and Mumps in 1847. Before the coming of the cotton industry the manufacture of hats used to be an important industry here. The transition between these two industries was before this picture was taken. It shows Nelson's hat factory as one of the last of its kind. There used to be a river running through the centre of Oldham. People called it by several names which includes Sheepwashes Brook because it sheep used to be washed in it.

§

A wise German used to say, 'Wenn du ruhig leben willst, darft du nicht sagen, was du weißt, und nicht glauben, was du hörst.' † I believe him.

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† *If you wish to lead a quiet life, never say what you know and never believe what you hear.*